

**WITTGENSTEIN, PHILOSOPHY AND THE LINE OF REALITY:**

**A STUDY IN METAPHILOSOPHY**

by

© Patrick Renaud

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis is to give an answer to two questions regarding Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. (i) *What is Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy?* A question to which I will give the following answer: Philosophy is a therapeutic, critical and *negative* (anti-theoretical) activity that seeks to keep the philosopher from thinking and of saying certain things (philosophically); an activity that seeks to bring back the philosopher to the visible evidence of language's appropriate use – evidence that becomes invisible for the one who philosophizes. (ii) *Considering what philosophy has been traditionally (an attempt to theorize systematically an original intuition regarding what separates reality from appearance), how can one consider that Wittgenstein's proposed activity participates in what the tradition of philosophy has done?* A question to which I will give the following answer: like the philosophers of the tradition, Wittgenstein has an original intuition regarding 'where' reality 'ends' and 'where' appearances 'begin'. Considering that real language is defined as what is appropriately used and that philosophical developments are defined as apparent language, his intuition is going to be reflected and echoed in his systematic attempts to bring the philosopher to see language as it is, and not as they think it should be. In other words, Wittgenstein, like previous philosophers, tries to trace the line of reality that is faithful to an intuition about the *location* of that line.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*General Orientation.* «...For me, it is a philosophical catastrophe, it is the very idea of a school, a regression of all of philosophy, a massive regression of philosophy. It is a very sad thing, the Wittgenstein *affaire*. They set up a system of terror, in which under the pretence of doing something new...but it is truly poverty brought to the level of the almighty (*la pauvreté instaurée en grandeur*). There are no words to describe this particular danger. It is a danger that comes back, it is not the first time that it has come back, but it is serious, mostly that Wittgensteinians are mean; and they break everything. If they win, then philosophy will have been murdered. They are assassins of philosophy. We need to be vigilant...»<sup>1</sup> Those are Gilles Deleuze's words in his *Abécédaire*, and they are the expression of a rejection without appeal (nor pity, nor charity, some would say) of a certain conception of philosophy. If, as an «expression», these words are crystal clear, they nonetheless *say nothing*, in the sense that Deleuze offers no substantial indication concerning the conception of philosophy that he rejects.

The aim of this thesis is twofold. **Firstly**, it will try to give an answer to the question that one might feel entitled to ask Deleuze after such a brutal declaration: «what is this conception of philosophy that you reject so violently?». In other words, *the aim of this thesis will be to articulate and study the conception of philosophy that is defended and incarnated by Ludwig Wittgenstein*. A good part of the following pages (chapter 2) must hence be understood as being a study of an essentially exegetical nature; a study that will

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<sup>1</sup> *L'abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, dir. Pierre-André Boutang, with Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, France, 1996.

enable me, I hope, to convince my reader of the following: *if it is possible to cut Wittgenstein's work in two (or three)<sup>2</sup>, it is not possible however to do the same thing when it comes to his understanding of what philosophy must do, and of what philosophy must not do.* In other words, under a visible discontinuity of his thought lies a continuous philosophical «program», in the same way that, under the discontinuity of our clothing one single body is hidden.

**Secondly**, I will try to defend the idea that even for the novelty and the originality of Wittgenstein's philosophical activity, and even for the *distance* that Wittgenstein wants to establish at different moments between what he does and what traditional philosophers have done, it is nonetheless possible to say that Wittgenstein is not doing *something else*,

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<sup>2</sup> I say here 'if it is possible' because the question of the division of the Wittgensteinian corpus has been a massive theme of discussion in the last decades. Traditionally, and following the indications of commentators like P.M.S. Hacker, the Wittgenstein's work has been divided in two phases, phases that would have produced «two powerful and complete philosophical world-pictures crystallized respectively in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*» (Hacker, *Connections and Controversies*, p. viii). This binary reading of the corpus has been supported or exacerbated by some of Wittgenstein's own remark, for example, in the preface to the *Investigations*: «Four\* years ago I had occasion to re-read my first book (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking». Other commentators, although some do recognize the didactic character of the binary division, have however argued that it (the division) was hardly justified, and that it promoted a lack of attention towards the philosophical importance and originality of other portions of the Wittgensteinian corpus, for example, the remarks gathered in *On Certainty*. This is notably what Danièle Moyal-Sharrock in *The Third Wittgenstein. The Post-Investigations Works: On Certainty*, through its thematic and philosophical insight, should be considered as a moment in and of itself, and thus separated from the *Investigations*. Hence, it would be ill-advised to reduce everything that Wittgenstein has written following his return to philosophy around 1929 to what would be *the* philosophy of the *second Wittgenstein*. It seems however that, generally speaking, and as it has been pointed out to me by one of my readers, «the dominant view within Wittgenstein scholarship is that we can properly speak of the early Wittgenstein and the late Wittgenstein. Hence, although I do indeed want to suggest a certain programmatic unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy; although I do indeed want to suggest that Wittgenstein has defended one conception of what philosophy (or better, of what the philosopher) *must do*, I do recognize that this unity is articulated in different ways (at least two) throughout Wittgenstein's writings. Also, in my explanation of the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy, I will refer to a certain number of nuances that depend in part on the generally recognized and accepted binary division of the Wittgensteinian corpus. In other words, the programmatic unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy does not seem to contradict the idea that this program might very well take different shapes in terms of actual philosophizing.

but that he is doing *it differently*. This proximity between what Wittgenstein does and what the philosophers of the tradition have done *will not rest*, like Jacques Bouveresse thinks – here being inspired by Wittgenstein – on the fact that the Wittgensteinian method «does not aim at excluding a certain type of problems (those posed by traditional philosophers; it rather aims at excluding a certain type of solution»<sup>3</sup>. Although this idea does have its charms, I must admit that it leaves me cold, and that the idea of defending an idea that I don't recognize as my own leaves me doubly cold. I will rather defend the idea – an idea for which Wittgenstein would have no sympathy – according to which what ties Wittgenstein's philosophical activity to what philosophy has traditionally done is (i) a common worry to go beyond the appearances that veil and obscure the eyes of the philosopher, so as to see reality as it *is*. Hence, following Jules Vuillemin who will play a non-negligible role in the following pages, what unites Wittgenstein and the philosophers of the tradition is a form of ontological worry, and its interest for what *is* as compared to what merely appears. (ii) There is also, for Wittgenstein and the philosophers of the tradition, the recognition of the fact that this ontological worry, this worry for reality, cannot be content with the evidence of appearance (which would be to accept that reality can be reduced to appearances), and that it actually asks for a work of thought on itself, concerning what it accepts as being real, what it asks of reality, etc. But this work is only possible when it stems from an initial choice with regards to what essentially separates reality from appearance, a choice to which the work, if it wants to be called 'philosophical', must remain faithful. This thesis must hence be understood as a rejection of the idea,

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III. Wittgenstein & les sortilèges du langage*, p. 32.

widespread in certain circles, philosophical or not, that Wittgenstein is *in fact* an antiphilosopher, or worst, to borrow Deleuze's words, an «assassin of philosophy».

*Motivations.* The following pages have been written under a triple impulsion: **firstly**, considering the *shape* of his work (the written expression of his idea), whether we have in mind the dogmatic propositions of the *Tractatus*, or the incessant questions and the sometimes serious, sometimes ironical remarks of the *Investigations*, the exegetical work that is needed to understand Wittgenstein's writings is particularly demanding. Although it is possible to deduce or to guess some of the philosophical positions or theses that Wittgenstein is attacking, it is important, to understand *what* Wittgenstein is doing, to first understand *why* he is doing what he is doing, to first understand the *optic* of his demarche. I do not at all want to suggest that this is the *only* possible or desirable «gateway», but an adequate understanding of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy can certainly be helpful when trying to understand the *content* of his philosophical activity.

**Secondly**, I chose to approach this study of the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy armed with a bibliographical apparatus constituted in part by the works of Jacques Bouveresse. If Bouveresse is quite known (*connu*), and up to a point, renowned (*reconnu*) in France and Montréal<sup>4</sup>, it is surprising and unfortunate that his name is totally unknown in the Anglo-Canadian academic world: *surprising*, because if there is one French philosopher that has dedicated a good amount of time and energy to discuss, study, and criticize Anglo-American philosophy, it is Bouveresse – his studies of Noam Chomsky, Richard Rorty, Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, Cora Diamond, James Conant and Stanley

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<sup>4</sup> Especially at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM), which awarded Bouveresse with a *honoris cause* doctorate in 2007.

Cavell, amongst others, are witnesses to this; *unfortunate*, because Bouveresse is a commentator who understands really well the thousand and one risks that endangers the commentator's task. Indeed, his exegetical work is constantly shaped by a worry (*souci*) to not talk *for* the commented author, nor to *make* the author in question *talk*. Bouveresse also has a rare talent: the talent of studying his favourite authors, without treating them like «untouchables» (*intouchables*) or «sacred cows» (*vaches sacrées*), like «immaculate minds». It is for this reason that I like to think that Bouveresse's commentaries on Wittgenstein and different aspects of his thoughts can be useful for my own task. My thesis, if it mainly intends to articulate Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, also hopes to help at the diffusion, even if minimal, of Bouveresse's writings in the Anglo-Canadian academic world. In other words, this thesis also wants to, modestly, weave links between a thinker and a certain academic sphere; a sphere that can only, I believe, benefit from the contribution of a voice as serious, and dedicated to philosophy as Bouveresse's.

**Thirdly**, this thesis is in a certain way symptomatic of a number of insecurities and questions that philosophy provokes in me: «what is philosophy?», «what do we *do* when we philosophize?», «what can philosophy offer?», «what are its promises?». If, as Wittgenstein says, philosophy is a therapeutic activity that must *bring* the thinker to no longer think and say certain things, it would not be completely false to say that this thesis has a therapeutic vocation, in the sense that it is an occasion for me to explore some of these questions; it is an occasion also to purify some of the expectations that I have towards philosophy, a purification that will not only be, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, an intellectual effort, an effort of understanding, but also, and mostly, an effort of the will.

*Determinations.* The first chapter of this thesis will try to articulate what one could call a *generic* conception of philosophy. I will do so by basing myself on the writings of Jules Vuillemin and Jacques Bouveresse's reading of them in his 2007-08 course at the *Collège de France*. Philosophy will here be described as an activity that essentially aims to trace a line, a frontier, separating reality from appearance. Philosophical activity must then be understood as a theoretical and systematic activity that produces a discourse of a general ontology. This «definition» of philosophy depends largely on the historical context of philosophy's birth, that is, the Greek context; and this context is profoundly marked by the influence of mythological thought and nascent scientific thought. It will hence be important to present Vuillemin's historical-philosophical reading of this period and of these two forms of discourse (mythological and axiomatic-scientific) that preceded and, in a way, gave birth to philosophy. Indeed, for Vuillemin, philosophy is largely defined by the relations that it maintains with mythological thought and scientific thought. It will be from this *generic* conception of philosophy that I will try to articulate the way in which the Wittgensteinian conception is faithful to a more traditional notion, and the way in which the former tries to distance itself from the latter.

The second chapter of this thesis will be divided in two parts that will respectively try to describe what one could call the *Alpha* and the *Omega* of the philosophical activity, according to Wittgenstein: *dans un premier temps*, I will try to answer the following question: «what is a philosophical *question*?». I will present a general or formal answer to this question: *philosophical questions emerge in the mind of the philosopher and they are the result of a miscomprehension of the logic of our language (TLP, 4.003)*. I will then present the different possible «causes» of our philosophical questions, and try to emphasize

the importance that Wittgenstein gives to these causes in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations*. **Dans un second temps**, I will try to answer the following question: «what is a philosophical *answer* or *solution*?». I will then also try, for symmetry's sake, to present a formal or general answer to this question: *considering the subjective* – ‘subjectivity’ in need of a definition, of course – *nature of our philosophical problems* (after all, they are born in the mind of the philosopher), *the ‘solution’ of a problem is simply the fact that the problems stops to be a problem for the philosopher*. Indeed, as Wittgenstein says: The solution of the problem is seen in the vanishing of this problem (TLP, 6.521). I will then try to articulate the ‘content’ of this solution, which I will do by describing the method that Wittgenstein proposes in the *Tractatus* (logical analysis), and then in the *Investigations* (conception exploration). This will bring me to make a few remarks on what one might call the *linguistic ontologies* which these methods suppose and on which they stand. **Dans un troisième temps**, I will try to suggest the centrality of the metaphor of «vision» for Wittgenstein, as much in the *Tractatus* as in the *Investigations*; I will also try to show that this metaphor is primordial when trying to understand what Wittgenstein means when he talks of the comprehension of the logic of our language.

The third chapter of this thesis will firstly try to trace the traits of a comparison between the verbal and theoretical conception of philosophy *à la Vuillemin*, and the therapeutic and silent conception *à la Wittgenstein*. Though this comparison will establish certain rapprochements regarding what constitutes a philosophical question (or what I will call the *Alpha* of philosophy), it will become obvious that when we turn our attention to the form of what must be a philosophical answer (the *Omega* of philosophy), there are radical differences between the two conceptions at hand. These differences will bring us to ask the

following question: *can we legitimately talk of an identity, of a similitude or of a community of questions considering that the answers that we are willing to give differ in radical ways?*

Faced with this question, I will try to defend the idea that not only does there exist, between Wittgenstein and the philosophers of the tradition, a community in terms of *questioning*, there also exists a community in terms of *answering*, even for the radical differences mentioned earlier on: being born in the midst of a question concerning reality and what distinguishes it from appearance, the philosophical activity develops itself through and by a worry to, through the gestures that constitute it, remain faithful to an initial choice concerning this distinction (between reality and appearance); and this holds true for both Wittgenstein and the philosophers of the tradition. The radical differences in terms of answers mentioned are hence not the sign of a difference in terms of activity, but rather the expression of a difference regarding the choice that – so as to be considered as a *properly* philosophical choice – initiates and determines the activity that stems from it.

I would like to bring this general introduction to a close by quoting Wittgenstein's opening words in his *preface* to the *Tractatus*, as they reflect my attitude regarding the following pages: «Its object would be attained if there were one person who read it with understanding and to whom it afforded pleasure.»

## CHAPTER I: Jules Vuillemin or a *generic* conception of philosophy

«If God could say the world, here is what he would say»

The aim of this first chapter will be to draw a portrait of what we could call a *generic* conception of what philosophy *does*, or of what it *is*. This generic conception of philosophy will be one that is defended by Jules Vuillemin, especially in his book *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, and it will be necessary to our understanding of it, or rather, to better understand why Vuillemin defends this conception, to articulate the ‘Greek context’ of philosophy’s birth. Starting *from* this conception, it will then be possible to determine the way in which the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy breaks away from what we have traditionally designated as being ‘philosophy’ and also, the way in which the Wittgensteinian conception, on the contrary, remains faithful to this traditional notion of philosophy. Indeed, if Wittgenstein thought sincerely that he was doing something unheard of in the history of philosophy when he came back to Cambridge in the 1930s, he nonetheless described his activity as being «one of the heirs of the subject which used to be called "philosophy"»<sup>5</sup>.

I chose Vuillemin’s work for at least three reasons. **Firstly**, there is the fact that the conception of philosophy defended by Vuillemin is articulated around a number of terms that will be useful when will come the time to question the type of philosophical *pretentions* that Wittgenstein rejects: the systematicity of philosophy, the theoretical character of the

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<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Le cahier bleu et Le cahier brun*, p. 72 (the translation is mine).

philosophical enterprise, the particular relation that philosophy shares with ‘common sense’, etc. **Secondly**, the conception of philosophy defended by Vuillemin leaves us with a series of crucial and difficult questions that we could also ask (and that we have to ask) of Wittgenstein, especially questions regarding the place that philosophy can make for the concept of ‘truth’, or regarding the possibility of something like authentic ‘philosophical knowledge’, or again regarding the nature of what some call the *autonomy* of the philosophical discipline from other fields of human knowledge, i.e., the natural sciences, the social sciences, mathematics, literature, etc. If most of these questions are not the direct focus of this thesis, it seems to me interesting to compare two conceptions of philosophy that, even for the distance that separates them – as we shall see, remain haunted by a series of identical, or at least similar questions. **A third reason** would be that Jacques Bouveresse abundantly discusses, in his final years at the *Collège de France*<sup>6</sup>, not only Vuillemin’s attempt to trace the outlines of a general classification of the different and possible philosophical systems, but also Vuillemin’s conception of philosophy, that he compares with that of many other thinkers, including Wittgenstein. There is hence already, in what constitutes a large section of my bibliographical material, a suggestion of the *fecundity* of such a comparison between Vuillemin and Wittgenstein.

As I have said, one of Vuillemin’s aim is to offer – and he does this from the standpoint of a historian of philosophy – a system of general classification of possible

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<sup>6</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Qu’est-ce qu’un système philosophique? Cours 2007 et 2008*, Nouvelle édition (en ligne), Paris : Collège de France, 2012 (généré le 21 juin 2014), Disponible sur Internet : <http://books.openedition.org/cdf/1715>, ISBN : 9782722601529 ; Jacques Bouveresse, *Dans le labyrinthe : nécessité, contingence et liberté chez Leibniz : Cours 2009-2010*, Nouvelle édition (en ligne), Paris : Collège de France (n.d.) (généré le 20 juin 2014), Disponible sur Internet : <http://books.openedition.org/cdf/1785>, ISBN : 9782722601611.

philosophical systems. Vuillemin's task then was to present, not *the* portrait of what *philosophical truth is*, effectively, or *the* portrait of what a philosophical system *should* be, but, on the contrary, to mark out a «logical space»<sup>7</sup> in which *any* and *every* philosophical system *can* exist. His enterprise of classification hence aims to essentially delimit a 'field of possibilities'. However, what Vuillemin does in the field of the history of philosophy is not *innocent*, in the sense that it depends on a precise metaphilosophical conception that could be summarized in the following expression: *philosophy is an essentially theoretical and systematic activity aiming to trace a line, a frontier, separating reality from appearance. Philosophy is hence an ontological activity in that it tries to identify what is as compared to what merely appears*. This affirmation too, is not *innocent* or unfounded, but is the result of an inference made from a certain reading of the history of philosophy. This history, according to Vuillemin, is not what would be the epic tale of a discipline slowly but surely overcoming its original oppositions, getting closer to, and finally reaching a universal consensus on what would be the *philosophical truth*: «philosophers are divided and (...) no part of the philosophical enterprise has even been the object of common agreement. Neither Kant's critique of metaphysics nor the so-called 'scientific method in philosophy' has been successful in bringing peace, or even armistice, to the battlefield»<sup>8</sup>. Vuillemin is not, of course, saying that it is not possible, by going through a book recounting the history of philosophy, to find 'important' or 'meaningful' philosophical events, for example, the Kantian critique of metaphysics, the Hegelian articulation of the

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 1. La pluralité des systèmes philosophiques et la question de l'applicabilité du concept de vérité à la philosophie» in *Qu'est-ce qu'un système philosophique?*, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. vii.

dialectical logic, or the Husserlian advent of the phenomenological method. But the importance of these events *is not* in having created a consensus nearing universality within the philosophical community, nor did it bring some form of peace; these events are important *because* they have generated *more* philosophy, that is to say, more debates, more quarrels, more combats<sup>9</sup>; combats that are, for sure, often relocated on a different level, or within a different theoretical or conceptual context, but combats nonetheless.

When opening a book of the history of philosophy, one can hardly deny the plausibility of such a reading of philosophy's history: Plato vs. the Sophists, Plato vs. Aristotle, Stoicism vs. Scepticism, Descartes vs. Leibniz, Kierkegaard vs. Hegel, Lévinas vs. Heidegger, etc.; the history of philosophy presents itself as a succession of philosophical battles. Even up until very recently, there was a division within philosophy between 'analytic philosophy' and 'continental philosophy' that suggested a dispute (or quarrel) concerning the method suitable to the ambition of *real* philosophy, concerning also the nature of the *real* question(s), concerning then the nature of the problems that are *truly* philosophical. This division is more and more recognized for what it probably – or maybe – is, that is to say, following Bouveresse's words, «a difference without distinction»<sup>10</sup>. However these later developments are not signs of what would be a 'grand reconciliation' in the field of philosophy: if there are signs of peace, it is a peace «obtained by resignation rather than by victory»<sup>11</sup>. Hence, this 'peace' of which Vuillemin talks about, is not a peace

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<sup>9</sup> The most recent and absurd example of this can be found in the following article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russian-man-shot-in-quarrel-over-immanuel-kants-philosophy-8820327.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Une différence sans distinction» in *Essais IV. Pourquoi pas des philosophes?*, pp. 163-203.

<sup>11</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. viii.

existing within a universal philosophical community, but a certain lull between *different* philosophical communities that have chosen to sign something like a pact of non-aggression. If the history of philosophy in any way informs us about what is to come, nothing indicates that this pact will be respected; and nothing points towards a mutation of this pact of non-aggression into a treatise of peace; or rather, one can only think this if one has an unfounded hope in some sort of ‘magical reconciliation’. Bouveresse talks about the situation of philosophy, as described by Vuillemin, in the following way: «I interpret that as meaning that everyone remains well convinced that they are right, but that they accept the idea that there is little if no hope of successfully convincing the others. To talk of resignation means that it is a situation one finally gets used to, and that one feels obliged to accept, but a situation that should not in any case be considered to be satisfactory»<sup>12</sup>. Regarding then the possibility of a ‘philosophical peace’, Vuillemin is not what one could call an optimist, although he is quite optimistic regarding the future of philosophy in terms of ‘material proliferation’: people will continue to philosophize.

One of the aims of Vuillemin’s book, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, apart from the attempt to offer a system of general classification of possible philosophical systems, is ***to articulate the reasons explaining the observation that the field of philosophy is a battlefield***, which he will mostly do in the third chapter, «Axiomatics, Ontologies, Philosophies», by «examining the nature and origin of philosophy»<sup>13</sup>. In this chapter, Vuillemin defends the idea that the confrontations that define the field of philosophy are

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<sup>12</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 4. La philosophie, les sciences et le sens commun» in *Qu’est-ce qu’un système philosophique?*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. vii.

the fruit of an oscillation between the historical contingency of philosophy's birth and the necessity of the nature of philosophy; or rather, that the nature of philosophy as an activity is largely influenced by the historical context of its birth. 'Philosophical pluralism' would hence not be a mere description of the philosophical *situation*<sup>14</sup>, a contingent situation; Vuillemin's philosophical pluralism is, in fact, much stronger, in the sense that it constitutes the description of the *fundamental situation of philosophy*.

In the following pages, I will first describe the contingent aspect of Vuillemin's explanation, that is to say, the Greek context of philosophy's birth, its *origin*: from the axiomatic and scientific awakening of Greek thought from its mythological slumber, to the philosophical appropriation of the axiomatic method in its aim to articulate a *general ontology*. I will secondly describe the necessary aspect of Vuillemin's explanation, that is to say, the *nature* of philosophy, its theoretical and systematic character. I will thirdly and finally explain Vuillemin's idea according to which philosophy is by nature, and necessarily so, *pluralistic*.

#### *A. From Myth to the Axiomatic Method to Philosophy.*

##### *A.1 From Myth...*

Common language allows for some, localised frontiers separating reality from appearances. For example: «There! There is someone!», or «Did you hear the thunder's roar? It sounded *like* a cry in the night!». But, Vuillemin says, very quickly these local frontiers will prove

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<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this thesis says nothing that is particularly scandalous, and one only needs to pick up a book of history of philosophy to see and accept *this* 'weak form' of philosophical pluralism.

to be insufficient, as «appearances are spread out as so many puddles which never conjoin into one and the same river»<sup>15</sup>. These frontiers will hence be *replaced* within a larger context, that is to say, reinterpreted from the standpoint of a more fundamental, a more general, and in a certain sense, a more ‘real’ division: «men as a group have come to believe in some order hidden from their perception and taken as supporting permanent features of reality that they would otherwise lose sight of»<sup>16</sup>. The *initial* articulation of this fundamental division between reality and mere appearances will be mythological.

It is here interesting to note that the mythical, for Vuillemin, is a ‘collective’ response: «A myth is a fabled story that symbolically represents the human condition *particularly in its social aspect*»<sup>17</sup>. Also, it plays an important role for the preservation and the cohesion of the social group, as it describes, through a legendary tale, the origins of an institution or an ensemble of institutions. It also, at the same time, justifies this or those institutions<sup>18</sup>. The mythical therefore plays a conditioning role, aiming at justifying an ensemble of social practices: «How could hungry tribes accept the hard discipline of scarcity during long winters if, behind the apparent death of Nature, they did not imagine some adventure, some descent into Hades and some exile there promising – possibly on the condition of some performed rites – the return to life?»<sup>19</sup>. No matter the form of the myth, no matter its elements, the mythological must therefore be taken seriously, considering that, in a certain sense, the survival of the group depends on it. But also, the myth must be

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<sup>15</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> Jules Vuillemin, «Le Misanthrope, mythe de la comédie» in *Dialectica*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1988, p. 117. (The emphasis is mine.)

<sup>18</sup> Jules Vuillemin, «Le Misanthrope, mythe de la comédie», p. 117.

<sup>19</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 97.

understood to encompass the totality of reality: maybe it is to ensure obedience to the practices that the myth suggests and justifies, but it would not be completely false to say that, in the same way that the survival of the social group depends on a collective adhesion to the mythological, this collective adhesion to the mythological is only possible if the group firmly believes in the universality of the myth.

Mythological discourse is hence totalizing, closed and totalitarian. *Totalizing*, because it encompasses reality as a ‘whole’; *closed*, because there is nothing outside this ‘whole’ that would be opposed to it; and if I say ‘*totalitarian*’, it is not to shock, or to dramatize the matter at hand, but rather to say the following: considering that the ‘respect’ of the myth and of what it says is seen as a necessary condition for the survival of the group, the myth, if it traces a frontier between reality and appearance, also establishes a frontier between member and stranger, between the group and what is exterior to it; obedience must hence be total to protect the group from a contamination, a malediction, or a ‘collective loss of self’. The myth hence traces *lines of obedience* in the midst of everyday life, in the midst then of individual and collective life, and *lines of classification and division* in the social sphere, divisions that are justified by the presence, in reality, of analogous divisions: «Though once it was thought that persons or groups themselves were identified with vegetables and animals, a more accurate analysis reveals that there are rather differences or oppositions between persons or groups which are correlated with representative differences or oppositions between vegetables and animals»<sup>20</sup>. «Initiation introduces the candidate into the human community and into the world of spiritual and cultural values. He learns not

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<sup>20</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, pp. 97-98.

only the behaviour patterns, the techniques, and the institutions of adults (...); not only does it relate how things came to be; it also lays the foundations for all human behaviour and all social and cultural institutions.»<sup>21</sup> Reality would hence be the territory of belonging, in the mode of obedience, while appearance, if it becomes the justification for action (individual or collective), would be the *lieu* of transgression, in the mode of treason; or rather, the limits that the myth traces are understood to be as much the limit of reality then the limits of the group itself. The myth hence develops an ontology, a ‘tribal ontology’. Or, if we are a little uncomfortable at the idea of associating those two words, ‘ontology’ and ‘mythology’, the fact remains that the mythological discourse offers an authentic *Weltanschauung*, an authentic view of what reality *is*.

A last point that should probably be mentioned is this: if, for Vuillemin, mythological developments are a human and collective response attempting to offer an «image of reality»<sup>22</sup>, these developments are necessary *because* this reality is not available or accessible to, so to speak, an ‘immediate’ reading of the world, that is to say, from the perceptions that we have of it; or rather, this reality is, as I have mentioned, «hidden from their perception»<sup>23</sup>. Hence, the myth would already be a *first hermeneutical step*, in the sense that the image that it offers of reality competes or is detached from the *perceptual image*<sup>24</sup>, judging the later to be insufficient to a proper understanding of reality, in the same way that a literal reading of a text is judged to be unable to offer us the ‘real meaning’<sup>25</sup> of

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<sup>21</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, pp. x-xi.

<sup>22</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 96.

<sup>24</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 97.

<sup>25</sup> The necessity of *another* reading, of a reading that is not literal, only makes sense if one believes that there is, *under the text*, another meaning, a *truer* meaning, one that is *more real*.

that text, hence the need to «read between the lines», or to search for «the spirit», and not only «the letter» of the text. Mythological discourse must therefore be understood as the *first emergence* of a ‘technical’ discourse that breaks away from a more common or immediate language, rooted in perceptual experience.

This mode of ‘knowledge’ of reality, even for its social ‘utility’ (or rather, even for its essentially socializing finality), is however, according to Vuillemin, limited on three different levels: the mythological system **first of all** suffers from what we could call a double-form of ‘discursive instability’; **secondly**, the mythological system lacks any well-defined mechanisms of ‘discursive expansion’, which amplifies, according to Vuillemin, the initial instability of the discourse; **finally**, the mythological system is limited *alethically*, on the level of truth, in the sense that cognitive adherence to the discourse does not rely or depend on its reference to a reality exterior to it; as Vuillemin says: «meaning here leaves no place to truth»<sup>26</sup>. The first limit of the mythological discourse must hence be understood as a double-problem, *thematically and semantically*, while the second limit must be understood as a *methodological* problem. I will also try to articulate the way in which these two first limits are intimately intertwined, and also the way in which they stem, in a certain sense, from the third, *alethical* limit.

*Discursive Instabilities: Precision*<sup>27</sup>. First of all, I should probably explain the reason why I chose to talk of «instability», and (firstly) why I designate this instability as being of a «discursive» nature (as opposed to being of a «mythological» or «psychological»

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<sup>26</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> Mr. Arthur Sullivan has been particularly severe here, and this severity has proved itself to be of a great help regarding the clarity of these paragraphs.

nature). By exposing the reasoning behind the choice of the individual terms of this expression, I hope to clarify the way in which I use the expression. **Firstly**, the instability (the meaning of which I will expose in a second moment) is not concerned with the psychological weakness or strength of those who believe in the truth of the mythological (hence explaining my refusal to coin the instability as being «psychological»). This expression is not concerned with the fact that it is possible to misuse language, or to accept something that *should not* be accepted. For example, the fact that somebody *can* wrongly say that  $2 + 2 = 5$  does not mean that the language of mathematics is discursively unstable. Indeed, while it is possible for a clumsy user to misuse a well-manufactured language (in this case, language is *innocent*), this case is not of the same kind as a case in which an ill-manufactured language *pushes* the user to error, a case in which language is highly complicit of the abuses that it suffers. The instability of which I want to speak concerns itself with the second kind of cases; it is therefore concerned with discourse itself – independently of its possible uses – in its semiotic constitution, in the mechanisms that determine the meaning of these signs, and in the way in which one ascribes thematic frontiers to it. Also, I refused to designate the instability as being specifically «mythological», because it is not impossible to imagine a non-mythological discourse (for example, a poem or a certain type of novel) sharing a similar form of instability.

**Secondly**, I chose the term of «instability» because, as it has been suggested earlier on, the first two limits emerge from the third limit, that is to say, they emerge from the problematic relationship (or the problematic absence of relationship) of the mythological discourse with the notions of «truth» and «exterior reality». The absence of a *solid ground*, the ground of reality, on which the mythological discourse could stand, makes it so that the

latter finds itself vulnerable to the political, religious and social inflexions that can be imposed upon the discourse and the significations that it carries. As we shall see, the value of the mythological discourse, the ‘reason’ why the believer believes it, has nothing to do with what would be its truth-value, has nothing to do with the fact that it corresponds to a reality exterior to it; rather, it is the (divine and sacerdotal) voice that pronounces it that gives discourse its value. In other words, it is not what is said, but the voice that says it that matters; and it is well known that *les paroles s’envolent au gré du vent qui les porte* (spoken words get carried away by the wind). To come back to the term of «instability», I chose it explicitly because of the image that it suggests: a discourse that does not have a ground on which to stand up is vulnerable to the winds of the arbitrary. One must keep in mind these types of considerations to understand what is to be exposed in the following paragraphs.

*Discursive Instabilities.* To come back to the limited character of the mythological discourse, myth is composed of a multitude of elements, of characters, of oppositions and differences. The problem that Vuillemin sees in this is that this ensemble of elements, of characters, of oppositions and differences, is not objected to any definition. To say it bluntly, the class of objects ‘studied’ by the mythological discourse is not defined<sup>28</sup>, enabling this discourse to talk, in a certain sense, about everything and anything (*de tout et de n’importe quoi*). In fact, of the mythological discourse, one cannot even properly speak of a ‘class of objects’, but only of an arbitrary, heterogeneous and eclectic agglomeration of objects, as it is concerned with humanity, with stars, with plants, with animals, with the sea, with rain, etc. As Vuillemin says in a footnote, this is partly due to the fact that the

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<sup>28</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 98.

‘constructive acts’ of the mythological discourse are not *organized* around one, well-defined methodological principle: «External resemblance, analogy, contiguity, contrariety, sameness in relative position and even psychoanalytical identification are called into play»<sup>29</sup>. Hence, if a myth’s central elements are united, they do not take the form of organic corporality, but they rather take the form of an ‘assemblage’ of disparate elements. They take the form of a *patchwork*. In other words still, mythological discourse does not possess, for Vuillemin, the virtue of coherence; or rather, the idea of ‘coherence’ refers to *the mere fact that certain elements are brought together*<sup>30</sup>. The myth and its objects are hence marked by a certain form of arbitrariness that is, according to Vuillemin, unacceptable. The scattering (*éparpillement*) of the objects which the mythological discourse takes hold of makes it so that these objects are simply, and randomly, gathered (*rapaillés*). They are not systematically organized, leaving the discourse with what one could call a *structural* or *thematic* instability.

A way maybe to caricature this structural or thematic instability, to better understand it, would be to compare the content of a given mythological discourse to the heterogeneous proclamations of a given individual: in the first case, the mythological discourse speaks of astronomical observations, psychological considerations, botanical findings, storytelling, biological descriptions, metaphysical inspirations, etc.; in the second case, the individual talks about the war in Iraq, the rise of ticket prices for the Montreal Canadians’ hockey games, feminine fashion, his stomach pains, the death of his cat, etc.

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<sup>29</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 98, footnote 12.

<sup>30</sup> In the same way that this shirt and these pants are ‘coherent’ *because and only because* I wear them both, and not because of a given common characteristic, or because of what these two items *are*.

Vuillemin sees these two discourses as being two examples of a same type of discursive disorganization. Although, in both cases, there is *one* discourse, one can question the coherence and unicity of these discourses; and in both cases, it becomes legitimate to ask «But *what* are you talking *about* exactly?» or «What unites thematically the different things that you are saying?». It is the fact that the mythological speaker jumps, seemingly at least, without any kind of theoretical justification, from a theme to the other that is unacceptable for Vuillemin.

A second form of discursive instability concerns not the mythological discourse, taken as an ‘ensemble of signification’, taken as a ‘whole’, but the mythological sign, understood as bearer of *one* meaning (*porteur d’une signification*). If each sign does have a meaning, this is not due to what one could call its ‘content’: it rather stems from the *role* that this sign *plays* within an opposition or from the difference and distance that separates the two signs of a given opposition. The meaning of sign is hence, in a way, formal, but devoid of any content, and this leaves the sign exposed to the risks of semantic ambivalence, that is to say that it becomes the holder of a multitude of possible meanings, for example: the opposition of night and day can be the symbol of an opposition between the living and the dead, between human and animals, between civilized and barbaric humans, between men and women, between adults and children, between the profane and the sacred, etc. The meaning of the sign ‘day’ (for example) is never, in a mythological

discourse, taken and understood *for itself* (*pris et compris pour lui-même*), never points back to what the day *is*, effectively<sup>31</sup>.

To be more explicit, let us take for example the mathematical function  $y = 2x$ . What is in question is the definition that one gives to 'x'. In the case of the mythological discourse, Vuillemin argues, the definition of 'x' is 'y/2'. The problem is that, although this gives us a formal appreciation of 'x', it does not at all give us any indication concerning the content of 'x'. The content of a sign, as Vuillemin says, is always neglected in favour of the formality of the oppositions and differences that exists *between* different signs<sup>32</sup>. The meaning of a sign is hence unstable, not because the opposition itself – night and day – is not formally fixed, but because the content of that opposition is never specified, which is again, for Vuillemin, unacceptable.

It is then possible to talk of two varieties of discursive instability. In the first case, it is discourse, as an entity, as a *unity*, that is unstable, in the sense that it is not anchored within a delimited and defined thematic field of objects. In other words, it would not be completely false to say that what Vuillemin reproaches to the mythological discourse is the fact that it is not articulated around *one* theoretical theme: the living, the stars, the earth, humanity, music, etc. In the second case, the instability is more precise, or located, because it has a semiotic nature. It is concerned with the sign, or rather, with the way in which we give it meaning in the mythological context: the sign is meaningful only when it participates to an opposition that transcends it. Furthermore, this fixation on the opposition (and the

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<sup>31</sup> The sign is always, borrowing from Frege's terminology, *like* an argument in a non-saturated function: the argument, while it does play a well-defined role in the function, is bearer of no content (or rather, which amounts to the same thing: it is the bearer of all and any possible content).

<sup>32</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, pp. 98-99.

difference that it creates at the expense of the sign and of its content) renders it possible to make an opposition say anything (*il est possible, à une opposition quelconque, de lui faire dire n'importe quoi*), as long as the logic of the opposition is maintained.

*Lack of mechanisms for discursive expansion.* If I have said earlier on that the mythological discourse was 'closed', one should not conclude from this that the discourse is 'static' or immutable, hence that it would be, in a certain sense, ahistorical. Eliade notes that «we know of none (primitive societies) that has not borrowed some cultural elements from the outside; not that, as the result of these borrowings, has not changed at least some aspects of its institutions; not that, in short, has had no history»<sup>33</sup>. A historical study of the mythological discourse, a history of the mythological, is hence possible. However, the particularity of primitive societies is that they lack a properly historical conscience<sup>34</sup>. Hence, an «expansion» of a myth through the addition of *new* elements is not possible from the standpoint of the myth-believer, in the sense that the believer only follows and respects these new practices *because* he believes them to have been, *from the beginning*, prescribed by the divinity whom he or she obeys. It is, for the believer, inconceivable that there *could be* a time, *before*, when members of the tribe lived *differently*. If there are indeed new elements that can be accepted – for example, new social practices, new tools, etc. – these new elements are only accepted *because* they «reinforce old oppositions so that the system runs no risk of revision or extension»<sup>35</sup>, and not because they would be the expression of something that is authentically new (it is in fact for the very opposite reason that these

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<sup>33</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p. xi.

<sup>34</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p. xii.

<sup>35</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

elements are accepted). Hence, «in contrast to modern society, primitive societies have accepted all innovations as so many ‘revelations’, hence as having a superhuman origin. The objects or weapons that were borrowed, the behaviour patterns and institutions that were imitated, the myths or beliefs that were assimilated, were believed to be charged with magical-religious power; indeed, *it was for this reason* that they had been noticed and the effort made to acquire them»<sup>36</sup>. The novelty that is incorporated in the ‘mythological bricolage’ is never *really* new, but rather, it is a *repetition of the same*, or a *reaffirmation of the same*, as it is only a way to reaffirm the *eternal seniority* or *antiquity* of the principles revealed by the divinity. The mythological ‘system’ is in this sense ‘closed’ as any novelty is quickly assimilated, or, so to speak, *swallowed* by the divine mouth that utters the mythological discourse: «traditional societies tend to project every new acquisition into the primordial Time, to telescope all events in the same atemporal horizon of the mythical beginnings»<sup>37</sup>. Considering the instability (discussed earlier) of the primary elements of the myth (oppositions, characters, differences...), the *novelty*, because it is a mere reaffirmation of the old, is hence bearer of the same (original) instability. In other words: even for the enrichment of the system in terms of content (new practices, new tools, etc.) the mythological discourse is formally closed, and fixed<sup>38</sup> in its own instability.

«...the mythological discourse is formally closed, and fixed in its own instability.»

I feel here obliged to unpack this sentence, as doing this will enable me to articulate the intimacy that the discursive double-limit and the methodological limit share. As I have

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<sup>36</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p. x-xi (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>37</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p. xii.

<sup>38</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

mentioned earlier on, the mythological discourse is not anchored in a defined and specified field of objects; it is then *thematically* heterogeneous (*thématiquement éclaté*). Heterogeneity that is at least partly due, according to Vuillemin, to the fact that the ‘constructive acts’ of the mythological discourse are not *organized* around a defined methodological principle<sup>39</sup>. The reason being that the drive of the mythological discourse, its will to encompass and to swallow new elements, does not depend upon the ‘nature’ of these elements, but rather depends upon their capacity to contribute and maintain the divine oppositions, differences, injunctions, etc., that shapes the tribe’s social life. The appropriation ‘methods’ are hence multiplied to the rhythm of the objects that are to be appropriated. However, these methods are as dispersed as the objects that are the aim of these gestures of appropriation. The dispersion of the field of objects is then reflected in these gestures, gestures that only amplify the initial or original dispersion. And this is due, or at least linked, to the mythological discourse’s tendency to overlook or to dismiss the semantic content of its symbols in favour of semiotic oppositions and differences. This tendency stems, I believe, from the third limit, that is to say, the alethic limit, to which I now turn.

*Alethic Limit.* The mythological ‘system’ is then not only ‘closed’ but also *closed on itself* (*refermé sur lui-même*), and if it is possible to talk about the ‘meaning’ of a mythological ‘system’, it is however impossible, according to Vuillemin, to speak of the ‘truth’<sup>40</sup> of the system. This can be explained by Vuillemin’s idea that the mythological discourse has an essentially socializing or ‘totalitarian’ function: the mythological

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<sup>39</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 98, footnote 12.

<sup>40</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

discourse, being motivated by a worry to *preserve* the existence of the tribe, as well as its social and political determinations (they are, after all, the expression of an *order*, dictated and willed, from the origins of time, by the gods; an order that must be reproduced and respected), is less the fruit of what Nietzsche calls a «will to know», than the result of a «will to obey»<sup>41</sup>. The meaning of a mythological opposition or sign does not stem from a form of reference to an exterior world or reality, but rather from its capacity to incite to the adoption of an ensemble of practices and of behaviours: «To understand a myth, we need not know in what circumstances the story would be true. We need only surmise the code at which the story hints»<sup>42</sup>. To use again a Fregean language, if the ‘mythological proposition’ does have a sense, it does not have a reference. Or rather, if a given opposition does indeed have a reference in nature (the opposition between night and day, for example), it is not at all in virtue of this reference that the symbolic opposition is accepted by a given tribe: it is on the contrary because of the political and social meaning (code) that an opposition can have that a tribe gives importance to an opposition. The myth hence closes itself on itself (*le mythe se referme sur lui-même*), in the sense that the political and social meaning (code) of the myth (for example the opposition between men and women) is justified by a given opposition in nature, that is itself justified by its ability to engender an ensemble of practices and behaviours that define the individual and collective life of the tribe. The value of an opposition hence stems not from its truth, but of its power, or of its socializing utility: «This mutually constant and circular support of its signs makes a myth meaningful, and

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<sup>41</sup> As I have said earlier: «Reality would hence be the territory of belonging, in the mode of obedience, while appearance, if it becomes the justification for action (individual or collective), would be the *lieu* of transgression, in the mode of treason».

<sup>42</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

meaningfulness is its unique law. (...) meaning here leaves no place for truth»<sup>43</sup>. It is in this sense that myth is closed *on itself*, and why Vuillemin rejects the idea that there could be such a thing as a ‘mythological truth’.

Finally, I have said earlier that the first two limits «stem, in a certain sense, from the third, *alethical* limit.» What I mean by this: the mythological discourse, considering its socializing vocation, is not interested by any notion of a reality that would be exterior to it. It is rather interested at maintaining and justifying certain forms of life, certain practices, and certain *habitus*, dictated by the divine mouth, no matter what one could call the truth-value of the discourse itself. This disinterest for an exterior reality translates itself in a lack of sensibility concerning the ‘nature’ of the studied object (lack of sensibility from which stem the shattering of the field of objects, and the equivocal character of the signs), and concerning the way in which we talk about it, or the way in which it is discursively appropriated (from which stems the shattering of the methodological field). Indeed, if what is important is to maintain the logic of certain social and political oppositions and divisions, it does not really matter what you say, which images you use. What matters is that these images do have a certain *logic* that reproduces the logic of the oppositions and divisions that one wants to maintain. There is hence a place for meaning, a code that needs to be transmitted, and respected by the hearer of the mythological discourse, but there is no place for truth.

These three limits will become unbearable, to the point where «a complete revolution in the use of linguistic signs – something which amounts to creating a new

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<sup>43</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

language»<sup>44</sup>, will prove to be necessary. In other words, the mythological language having reached its own limits, a new language must be brought to the science; language provided, according to Vuillemin, by «free philosophy and (the) axiomatic method»<sup>45</sup>.

## A.2 ...to the Axiomatic Method...

Although Vuillemin readily acknowledges that Greeks were not the only ones to make important developments in the different and particular sciences – grammar, logic, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, astronomy, etc. –; although others have been able to do this by liberating themselves from a series of mannerisms mostly defended through an incestuous relationship between the political and the sacerdotal classes<sup>46</sup>; and although he would not be inclined to talk of what would have been a *miracle grec*<sup>47</sup> – or rather: he would certainly refuse to talk in terms of ‘miracles’, as if the passage from the mythological to the scientific could have been possible only through the intervention of the divine –, Vuillemin does however believe that Ancient Greece has been the *lieu* of a singular and particular event: the birth of philosophy and of the axiomatic method. As Bouveresse reminds us: «it is an event that is in no way universal, nor was it necessary; an event of which we must not underestimate its local and eminently contingent character»<sup>48</sup>. The particularity of the ‘Greek case’ is to be found, according to Vuillemin, in the following fact: while elsewhere, the different sciences were developed, so to speak, *on their own*

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<sup>44</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

<sup>45</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

<sup>46</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Paul Jorion, «Le miracle grec : pouvoirs de la pensée anti-symétrique» in *Papiers du Collège international de philosophie*, No. 51, *Reconstitutions*, 2000, pp. 17-37.

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Ouverture I : résumé du cours de l’année 2007» in *Qu’est-ce qu’un système philosophique?*, p. 2.

*ground*, behind closed doors, independently from one another, the Greek intellectual world has gradually developed itself through an education of the different sciences, *relocated* in the context of a larger liberal education. Hence, the sciences that were, in the non-Greek world, disparate, divided, and independent, have been in Greece gathered within *one* common educational demarche. But this gathering could only be made possible if all of the sciences shared a *common methodological ground*. The studying of the different sciences has therefore been developed and organized around a common methodological principle, the axiomatic method: «Only the Greeks conceived of a rational way of dealing not only with scientific but also with religious, political, ethical and artistic subjects. Greek science was a unique event in the history of mankind because of the axiomatic method it applied in arithmetic, geometry, logic, astronomy, harmonics and statics»<sup>49</sup>.

As I have mentioned earlier, the mythological discourse, if it had an undeniable social (organizing) force, was however limited, being contaminated by at least two forms of discursive instability; another problem was that the ‘truth’<sup>50</sup> of the mythological discourse, or rather, the belief in the truth of the mythological discourse, was not motivated by the *content (teneur)* of the discourse, but by *who* pronounced it: the priest, the shaman, that is to say, the gods. In a certain sense, if mythological thought identified the *voice* as being the *lieu* of truth, scientific thought will see *speech (parole)* as being the *lieu* of truth<sup>51</sup>. Mythological thought was hence, so to speak, still too attached to the fluctuations

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<sup>49</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

<sup>50</sup> I use quotation marks because, as I have said, Vuillemin refuses to talk of ‘mythological truths’, even though he does accept the notion of ‘mythological meaning’, or ‘mythological signification’.

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle says: «The false and the true, indeed, are not in the things, (...) but in thought» (*Metaphysics*, E. 4, 1027b25).

encountered in the sphere of perception, and the emergence of scientific thought was an occasion to *excavate* the abstract character of thought, «at the risk of appearing indifferent to experience and the sensible world»<sup>52</sup>. The reason why mythological thought has gradually been discarded in Greece as being limited is partly due to this *shift* of the *lieu* of truth. Indeed, from the moment that the ‘criterion of truth’ is not the maintaining of the justification of an ensemble of political, religious, and familial institutions, from the moment that truth is not identified with *the fact that* it is the priest that *speaks* it, hence from the moment that truth is identified to *what is said*, it is evident, or at least comprehensible that this *shift* should be doubled with a methodological shift, incarnated in the development<sup>53</sup> of the axiomatic method. Therefore, it is not the different elements of mythological discourse that will be gradually rejected as being inadequate in regards to the new method of Greek science, but rather, the context in and by which one should give them a ‘truth-value’, or the reasons which justify our belief in them. There is hence, for Vuillemin, a qualitative (and not only a quantitative) difference separating the mythological ‘epistemological’ context and the scientific epistemological context; a difference that has the features of a real ‘break’ (*coupure*).

From the beginning, the scientific activity of the Greeks will be *worried* to not only expand the *area* of discourse; there will also and more importantly be a *worry* for what one

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<sup>52</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

<sup>53</sup> Once again, one must not talk here of a miracle, or of the ‘apparition’ of the axiomatic method, because we risk forgetting the deeply historical character of this event; also, we risk constructing a mythical history of thought, something that Vuillemin wants to avoid at all cost. In this sense, it is more accurate to speak of the ‘development’ of the axiomatic method: «The thought from which stems modern thought does not brutally awake in the fifth century B.C. in Ancient Greece: it has been in gestation for centuries in the Mediterranean region» (Paul Jorion, «La linguistique d’Aristote» in V. Rialle & D. Fiset (ed.), *Penser l’esprit : des sciences de la cognition à une philosophie cognitive*, p. 261).

could call the ‘organic unity’ of the discourse, a *worry* for the *internal* coherence of speech. The scientific discursive production will hence no longer be but a mere process of juxtaposition, or a ‘proliferation of the absurd’<sup>54</sup>, as Bergson would say; it will also have to be internally ‘continuous’ in three different senses of the word that correspond and are, in a sense, a ‘response’ to the three limits of the mythological discourse that have been discussed earlier.

*Looking for discursive stability.* **Firstly**, the axiomatic method will address the two issues of discursive instability: the instability of the signs, taken as a ‘whole’, and the instability of *the* sign, taken in its individuality. Indeed, Greek science will cultivate the importance of stabilising the structures that it constructs, and this will be done through an effort to delimit the ‘field of study’ (*champ d’étude possible*), by establishing the fundamental and irreducible concepts and principles of each of the sciences<sup>55</sup>. For example, biology will delimit its interest to the world of the ‘living thing’ and exclude from its field of study the ‘inanimate thing’; astronomy will delimit its interest to the celestial movements and phenomena. The different sciences, contrary to mythology that left its field of possible objects opened to any sort of intrusion, will ‘close’ and organize themselves around a given domain of objects. That being done, the ‘constructive acts of the discourse’ that were, in the context of mythological thought, heterogeneous and eclectic, will slowly enter a process of organization to better correspond to the nature of the studied objects, or to the nature of the class of objects. For example, while mythology understands the men-women dichotomy by reference to the night-day dichotomy, biology will be unable to benefit from this kind

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<sup>54</sup> The Bergsonian expression is cited by Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

of explanatory detour, won't be able to proceed by mere resemblance, or by analogy, and will have to concentrate its attention on the men-women dichotomy *itself*. Science will hence fix its gaze on an ensemble of objects and, through this, the, so to speak, quality of these objects will bring the scientist to limit their 'epistemic gestures', that is to say, their 'acts of knowledge', that enable them to know these objects, that give them *access* to the objects.

The organization of the accepted 'constructive acts of the discourse', their 'specialization' according to their object of study, will also lead to a semantic stabilisation of the sign, understood in its individuality. Indeed, the establishment of the conceptual and principled foundations will have consequences: when I understand *this* sign, I now understand it, not in virtue of other signs, or in virtue of an opposition of which *this* sign is part of, but rather, in virtue of what this sign *is*, in virtue of its content. The sign is hence no longer *like* a simple argument in a non-saturated function, as it now has a fixed value. Science will hence overturn the primacy that myth conferred to oppositions and differences existing between signs, and that, at the expense of the content of these signs, to now affirm the primacy of the sign's content. I now understand, for example, what a human being *is*, not in virtue of its opposition with the Olympian gods, but in virtue of an ensemble of characteristics that are those of the human being: two-legged, ability to speak, sociality, culturality, religiosity, etc. The meaning of a sign is hence transformed: while the meaning of the mythological sign was defined by the *other* sign (and vice-versa), the meaning of the scientific sign is now the fruit of a research surrounding the sign and its referent<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> This does not mean that mythological meanings were automatically rejected; it rather means that they were verified, put to the test, the test of the new scientific method: «Even those who tended to restore traditional

*Looking for a mechanism of discursive expansion. Secondly*, as I have said earlier, the mythological discourse, if it was possible *from the outside* to constitute its history, it could not however accept the idea of an ‘internal historicity’, nor could it accept the idea of an authentic novelty within the discursive body. These ideas were unacceptable because they were in contradiction with the immutable, permanent and totalizing character of the divine revelation that gives life to myth. The god of mythology always has *already* said everything, and if he seems to say something new (propose a new practice, propose a new tool, or a new plant, etc.), it is only appearance and is in fact the result of our *bad hearing* (*le résultat de notre mauvaise écoute*). The novelty is, and this is how it can be accepted and believed as true, swallowed by the divine mouth so that the latter can reveal the former to us *since the beginning* (afin qu’elle puisse nous la révéler *depuis toujours*): «for the man of traditional societies everything significant – that is everything creative and powerful – that has ever happened took place *in the beginning*, in the Time of myths»<sup>57</sup>. Hence, when a new object *appears*, «since traditional societies have no historical memory in the strict sense, it (takes) only a few generations, sometimes even less, for a recent innovation to be invested with all the prestige of the primordial revelations»<sup>58</sup>.

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faith did it from positivist arguments and according to demonstrative schemes in agreement with the new scientific method» (Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 104). For example: «Patrick» is no longer merely understood as the opposite of «Arthur», or is no longer understood *from* «Arthur»: the meaning of «Patrick» is now, so to say, *discovered* through a studying of the object that is Patrick: he is 26 years old, studies at MUN, is supervised by Arthur, is interested in Wittgenstein, Bouveresse, Vuillemin and Granger, has a passion for music, for soccer, etc. This again, does not mean that the Patrick-Arthur opposition, the student-supervisor opposition is necessarily rejected; it must rather answer to a new criterion, that of the «new scientific method».

<sup>57</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p. xi.

<sup>58</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p. xii.

On the contrary, scientific thought admits the internal historicity of the discourses that it produces; it admits the possibility of novelty, the possibility of its own «expansion»: new concepts, new objects of study, etc. Hence, if the different sciences present themselves as being ‘closed’ – in the sense that they close themselves around a particular class of objects, or in a defined and delimited field of investigation (i.e.: the *field* of the living, the *field* of the stars, the *field* of the divine, etc.) – it is nonetheless possible to say that the sciences expose themselves and the discourses that they produce to the possibility of revision and change, an exposure that mythology refused. The scientific expansion of knowledge, contrary to the eclectic and heterogeneous expansion of mythological belief, cannot however be arbitrary, but must respect a series of rules of construction, definition and deduction<sup>59</sup>. The expansion of the scientific discourse will hence be, in a certain sense, *guided*, and ‘logical’. Logic will not be however a mere tool in the *perpetuation enterprise of the same* and of the opposition and differences that constitute it, as it was the case for the myth: indeed, while myth could only accept novelty if it was understood to be *already* ancient, that is to say, *already* filled by the discourse’s original oppositions and differences, science tries to accommodate novelty, it tries to accommodate difference *qua* difference, by including it in a explicative hypothetic-deductive system<sup>60</sup>. Science tries, through a series of axioms, to explain as much of different things as possible. The knowledge that the scientist acquires of a thing is no longer constituted by a detour through a *recognition* of a more ancient opposition, but rather, assembled by the weaving of explanatory links between elements, weaving that is operated in line with rules of construction, definition,

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<sup>59</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

<sup>60</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 103.

and deduction that are understood as axioms. By understanding things *on their own terrain*, and not on the terrain of an original opposition, the nature of the scientific expansion is changed: it ceases to be an enterprise of classification of things to become an enterprise of explanation of things<sup>61</sup> and phenomena. As a classification tool, a natural opposition (night and day) was used to justify classifications and divisions within society (men vs. women, adult vs. children, profane vs. sacred). Science not only classifies, but it also aims at explaining these classifications by studying the classified objects *for their own sake*.

There is another thing that I believe has to be mentioned: the axioms of a science are never considered to be pronounced by the voice of the divine; they are not therefore exempted from possible revisions. Indeed, even if the mythological and the scientific discourse share a somewhat common *nature*, in that they both aim to offer an «image of reality», for Vuillemin, their *mode* of discourse differ from one another, the mythological discourse being an enterprise of classification, and the scientific discourse being an enterprise of explanation. In the first case, the classification process is made following a principle that escapes any form of verification or revision; this principle is, in a sense, *before* or *outside* of experience, *outside* of the world (an evidence of that is the divine origin of the voice that reveals the mythological discourse). In the second case however, the explanation is valid or acceptable *only if* it can account for the studied phenomenon or object. Hence, even if a series of axioms A can explain a certain ‘quantity’ of things, it can

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<sup>61</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 103.

and must eventually be replaced by another series of axioms A' or B that will be able to explain what A explains *and more*. We can therefore talk, in science, of 'progress'<sup>62</sup>.

*Alethic investigation.* **Finally**, if for Vuillemin, it was possible to attribute a meaning to the mythological discourse, it was out of question to give it any form of 'truth-value' in the strict sense of the word 'truth', because «to understand a myth, we need to know in what circumstances the story would be true. We need only surmise the code at which this story hints. (...) Meaning here leaves no place for truth»<sup>63</sup>. In fact, myth, as well as the discourse that it produces and enables – and this might be the reason of the eminently social role that it plays – is conservative in the sense that, as Eliade reminds us, it tries to justify a series of institutions and social and political practises. The source of the myth's 'truth' is hence to be found in the myth itself. The scientific discourse on the other hand, although it does *start somewhere*, that is to say, although it does start with a series of axioms, of definitions, of rules of deduction and observation, etc., the scientific discourse then merely *uses* these elements to better explain a set of phenomena. Attributing a truth-value to a scientific proposition is only possible if this proposition gives an adequate explanation of a phenomenon or an object that is (pre)supposed to be 'exterior' to discourse; the proposition only has *value* in the sense that it is capable of reconstructing the region of reality that it tries to describe and explain. The source of the truth of the discourse

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<sup>62</sup> The scientific discourse is hence, in a certain way, the first step of what we could call a 'humanization' or a 'weakening' (*fragilisation*) of truth, in the sense that discourse cannot rest or assess its strength on the origin of the voice that pronounces it; it must rather support itself, stand on its own two feet, and this can only be done slowly and difficultly, as it is the case for a child learning to walk, through a learning process defined by trials and errors; and this also holds true for the fundamental principles and concepts that enable the opening and the articulation of the scientific discourse.

<sup>63</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 99.

is then no longer found *in* the discourse itself (as it was the case with the mythological discourse), but rather *in* the phenomenon, *in* the studied object<sup>64</sup>.

Also, it is necessary to note that the coherence that exists between the axioms of a science and the coherence existing between these axioms and the discursive developments that they permit ensure that truth can, so to speak, *spread* through the entirety of the scientific discursive tissue; and it is in this sense that Greek science was understood as being able to *say something* true about reality: «just as the set of these principles was recognized by the Greeks as true, and just as the rules of deduction were seen to preserve truth-values, so the logical consequences of the principles were themselves recognized as true»<sup>65</sup>.

### A.3 ...to Philosophy.

The Greek scientists, newly liberated from the viscous and vicious circularity of mythological discourse, newly ‘initiated’ to the demands and requirements of the scientific method, were now faced with two unprecedented difficulties; two difficulties for which it would be philosophy’s task to address.

**Firstly**, if science could rest its developments on an ‘axiomatic basis’ *from which* it could articulate a coherent and explanatory discourse about the studied phenomenon, this basis is as enigmatic as its status uncertain: «Many mathematicians admit – as did even the ancients – the reality of the objects about which they speak (...). But such an interpretation

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<sup>64</sup> If the source of truth is in the phenomenon or in the object, this idea does not contradict what I have said earlier about the *lieu* of scientific truth being *in* the discourse. *Il en est ainsi*, in the same way that the source of the sea is the different rivers that fills it, while its *lieu* is its own bed.

<sup>65</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 100.

is never forced upon us by the axioms themselves, which do not tell us what the elements *are*»<sup>66</sup>. For a mind newly liberated from myth, to leave this kind of interrogation unanswered is to dive back in the mythological mode of justification, the scientist now taking the place of the shaman or the priest, and the axioms now being what is divinely murmured to the scientist's ear – which is, of course, unacceptable<sup>67</sup>. The scientist feels the need to found his discourse on an even more solid basis. If the scientific discourse constitutes itself downstream from the axiomatic apparatus guided by the logical voice of Virgil, philosophical discourse will constitute itself upstream from that same apparatus, guided by the equally logical voice of Beatrice. Philosophy hence takes the form of an ontological interrogation concerning the constitutive elements of the scientific discourse. We can hence, in a certain sense, understand philosophy as a return or a reversal of the axiomatic method on itself in the sense that it is the (scientific) products of the axiomatic method that are now put into question: «What are numbers, points and lines? What kind of existence may be claimed for them? These are philosophical question»<sup>68</sup>. The scientific discourse, constructed through axiomatic means, and contrary to mythology, had estranged itself from any reference to the ontological<sup>69</sup>, and it was up to philosophy to root the scientific discourse into the ontological ground. Philosophy's first task, as described by Vuillemin, seems to be of a foundational nature, that is to say: to secure the axiomatic foundations of the science.

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<sup>66</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 104 (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>67</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 101.

<sup>68</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 104.

<sup>69</sup> «As a hypothetico-deductive system, axiomatics is thus completely foreign to ontology» (Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 104).

**Secondly**, if scientific developments permitted an expansion of the surface of our knowledge about the world and of its phenomenon, and if philosophy at first concerned herself with questions of local ontology, the fact remains that the passage from the mythological to the scientific left a fundamental void in the sense that the axiomatic-scientific method was doubled with a ‘fracturing’ of the world in multiple fields of study, hence losing the possibility and capacity to construct a general and unitary world-view: «The world of myth had crumbled: its material had to be reorganized»<sup>70</sup>. It will then be to philosophy to pass from these questions of local ontology to general questions regarding a general ontology that will be articulated around a fundamental problematic: the distinction between reality and appearance<sup>71</sup>. The trajectory of philosophy hence is similar to that of Wittgenstein – «My work has extended itself from the foundations of logic to the essence of the world»<sup>72</sup> –, as it extends itself from the axiomatic foundations of science to the essential structures of reality.

*B. Once upon a time was philosophy...according to Vuillemin.*

The preceding exposition of the intellectual context of the birth of philosophy, and of the link that Vuillemin traces between philosophy and the axiomatic method, is useful in the sense that it enables us to understand why Vuillemin thinks of philosophy as he does, and why he describes it as being an *essentially* theoretical *and* systematic activity aiming

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<sup>70</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 104.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 7. Apparence et réalité : le problème de leur distinction comme problème fondamental de la philosophie» in *Qu'est-ce qu'un système philosophique?*.

<sup>72</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916* (2.18.1916).

to trace a line, a frontier separating reality from appearance. The exposition also helps us to understand why Vuillemin refuses the idea that philosophy could be *otherwise*. Why, for example, she cannot be reduced to be another literary activity amongst others; the exposition also enables us to imagine Vuillemin's reaction if he was to read what Deleuze and Guattari say about logic and philosophy in their book *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*: «It is a genuine hate of philosophy that animates logic, in its rivalry or its will to supplant philosophy»<sup>73</sup>. For Vuillemin, logic is on the contrary not animated by a hate of philosophy: it is rather the hate of logic that disfigures philosophy, because philosophy is, to be blunt, an ontological discourse regulated by the rules of logic.

### *B.1 An activity that is essentially theoretical...*

For Vuillemin, philosophy is a theoretical activity in the sense that it tries to articulate an «image of reality»<sup>74</sup>. Philosophy hence shares with mythology (and not, as one might think, with science) this theoretical aspect. «Theory»: «*theorein*», which means «to contemplate», or «to speculate»; «*theoros*», which means «spectator». This double etymology is

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<sup>73</sup> Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, p. 80.

<sup>74</sup> This is indeed a bizarre characterization of what it means for an activity to be theoretical. But I think that what Vuillemin wants to press is the idea that philosophy, even for its dismissal of mythology's discursive practices, shares with it a common goal: to articulate, discursively, an image of reality. Science, though theoretical in the common sense of the word (it produces theories), does not aim to do *that*, and is hence not theoretical *in that sense*. It rather aims at explaining phenomena through the postulation of axioms, of basic concepts. It is in this sense that philosophical theorization has nothing to do with scientific theorization: the former, unlike the latter, is not hypothetical in that the theses of a philosophical system are not to be verified by some natural phenomena. What will bring together philosophy in science (or rather, what they have in common) is, according to Vuillemin, the important and central role of the axiomatic method has a means towards the stabilization of the discourse (philosophical or scientific) that is under construction. Of course, what is questionable here is to what degree is Vuillemin right in assessing this central and decisive role to the axiomatic role (for philosophy and for the sciences): is this still true for the contemporary sciences, and if not, what consequences does that hold for contemporary practices of philosophy? Has this ever been true at all?

interesting because it points to the *relation* that philosophy shares with the reality it observes, and to its *position* or *location* as compared to this same reality. Hence philosophy *contemplates* reality and *speculates* about it, about its essential structure. However philosophical theorization, for Vuillemin, has nothing to do with scientific theorization, in the sense that the first, contrary to the second, is not ‘hypothetical’: «philosophy does not describe worldly facts, does not aim to, from them, *construct abstract models* proper to logical-mathematical manipulations and susceptible to be used as basis for previsions and interventions in the empirical world»<sup>75</sup>.

In this sense, for philosophy, phenomenon are not objects to a study aiming to *explain* them – for this is the goal of science. Rather, phenomenon become, so to speak, *raw material* for a speculation concerning the *emplacement* of the frontier between reality and appearance. Philosophy hence does not aim to *save* phenomenon, or to save the ‘things’ of daily experience; it rather aims to *take them* and to, *from them*, speculate *about them*. Philosophy would hence be a «knowledge without object»<sup>76</sup> (*connaissance sans objet*), or rather, if philosophy *does have* an object, it is not *this* or *that* object (this chair, this ventilator), but the ‘world’ as a «virtual totality»<sup>77, 78</sup>. Philosophy understood as an activity of theorization, of «pure theorization»<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 19, 1993, p. 59.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Pour la connaissance*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 1988.

<sup>77</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> To talk about the ‘object’ of philosophy is hence, in a certain sense, a perverted use of the concept of «object», in the sense that an object is ordinarily the product of a *decoupage* within reality, enabling us to differentiate *this* object from *that* object, whether it is in the context of ordinary life (this chair differentiated from this ventilator), or in the scientific context (neutrons differentiated from protons); the «object» of philosophy, the world-as-a-totality, is not the product of an exercise of differentiation in the sense that the world differentiates itself from *nothing*.

<sup>79</sup> «Pure» in the sense that it does not depend upon any kind of reference to empirical experience. Maybe it would be better to call philosophy an exercise in «*a priori* theorization»?

As it is suggested by the second etymological root of the word «theory», this activity of pure theorization is however done «from a distance», or «from the standpoint of ‘exteriority’» of the sphere of phenomenon, in the sense that they are the object of a spectacle that the philosopher-theorist contemplates. This *distance* is important for two reasons: it firstly affirms the *uselessness* of philosophy in the sense that the speculation of the spectator does not contribute nor does it influence what is happening on stage: «in the most common sense of the expression ‘useful’ philosophy cannot and must not be *useful*»<sup>80</sup>. Philosophy does not aim to bring about change in the world, it does not aim to «change the world»<sup>81</sup>. It is, for philosophers like Vuillemin, Granger, and Bouveresse, the reason the history of philosophy is not only the history of our philosophical *productions*; the history of philosophy is also the history of how philosophy has defended itself against the reproaches of the public concerning its utility (or rather, its lack thereof). The uselessness of philosophy is hence one of the sources of what makes its scandalous, but also, for others, the essential source of its dignity. Philosophy is hence distinguished, on this particular point, from myth: while myth has a deeply social use, which was to preserve and justify an ensemble of social, political and religious institutions, philosophy is devoid of such aims. We could here quote the words of Paul Valéry: «A man that gives up the world puts himself in the position to understand it».

Secondly, the distance that exists between the philosopher and the spectacle that he contemplates leads us to note what we could call the ‘elitist’ or ‘aristocratic’ character of

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<sup>80</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», p. 57.

<sup>81</sup> This conception of philosophy is hence radically opposed to that of someone like Marx, for example: «Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.» (Karl Marx, «Thesis on Feuerbach»).

Vuillemin's conception of philosophy. Indeed, in the same way that the spectator *is not* part of the play, in the same way that there is a *distance* between the spectator and the actor, the philosopher distances themselves from the «man on the street» and of what he (or *they*, the people in the street) says about the phenomenon that constitute daily life. Philosophy «reorganizes representations that are already immanently organized in that they constitute our immediately lived experience, individually and collectively»<sup>82</sup>. If the philosopher talks about, or rather, *from* the same things as the «man on the street», they *do not* say the *same* things as him. If the «man on the street» talks, it is to talk about his «experience» of things, of *these* things, of *those* things; but the philosopher wants to talk about the world *in general*, a generality of which we cannot have any experience, «except for the mystics, maybe»<sup>83</sup>. But to talk about things in their total generality, one must walk away from things expressed in their particularity. The position of the philosopher is hence one of *liberation, freedom*, and *privilege*, in the sense that they are not constrained by the limits imposed by the economic structures of daily life (*les structures économiques du quotidien*), imposed by particular things; they are completely cut from *action*, because action is always particular, specific-to, and never universal. The philosophical activity in a sense confirms and reinforces the privileged status of the philosopher.

## B.2 ...and systematic.

Vuillemin however insists, and consistently underlines the fact that the philosophical activity is not only theoretical, but also and foremost «systematic». Michael Dummett, in

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<sup>82</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», p. 60.

<sup>83</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», p. 60.

his article «Can Analytical Philosophy Be Systematic and Ought it to Be?», notes that we can understand the word «systematic» in two different senses: **firstly**, the term «systematic» can mean that philosophy «is supposed to lead to the construction of an articulated theory, similar to those that have been proposed by philosophers who have constructed big ‘systems’»<sup>84</sup>. **Secondly**, the term «systematic» can refer to the philosophical ‘demarche’, or to the philosophical ‘method’: philosophy would be systematic in the sense that the philosophical community would have agreed upon a given method and a set of criteria of research, without expecting of philosophy that she should lead to *one* articulated theory<sup>85</sup>.

As it is noted by Bouveresse, these two meanings of the word «systematic» are not mutually dependant: «for the most part, the natural sciences are systematic in these two senses. But history, for example, is only systematic in the second sense: it possesses methods of research commonly accepted and criteria recognized to test the validity of the results of the historian’s research; but it does not lead to the constitution of an articulated theory»<sup>86</sup>. Dummett believes, as Descartes, Spinoza, Kant and Husserl have believed before him, that philosophy finally is in the position, due to the developments in the philosophy of logic and in the philosophy of language since Frege, to *change its nature*, to cease to be a merely speculative activity (Dummett’s use of the word «speculative» is pejorative) to «take an authentically scientific character»<sup>87</sup>; this scientific character would *finally* enable

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<sup>84</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 2. La philosophie peut-elle être systématique et doit-elle l’être?» in *Qu’est-ce qu’un système philosophique?*, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 2. La philosophie peut-elle être systématique et doit-elle l’être?», p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 2. La philosophie peut-elle être systématique et doit-elle l’être?», p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 2. La philosophie peut-elle être systématique et doit-elle l’être?», p. 3.

philosophy to deal with and resolve the problems that have defined its history. Vuillemin, on the other hand, is *immunized* against this form of philosophical optimism, as it has been suggested at the beginning of this chapter. If philosophy is to be ‘systematic’, which it is, it can only be in the first sense of the word, that is to say: philosophy is systematic in the sense that it proposes an articulated theory concerning the totality of reality, a theory by which reality is contrasted from appearance<sup>88</sup>.

When Vuillemin says that the philosophical activity constructs an *articulated* theory, this theoretical construction is – and this is what distinguishes philosophy from the theoretical enterprise of mythology, as it has been said earlier – *guided* by the logical voice of Beatrice: «We may define the system of signs that is peculiar to philosophy as an ontology subjected to logic»<sup>89</sup>. Philosophical ontology is therefore, so to speak, a genuine onto-logy, or rather, it is only as a *philosophical* activity that one can truly do justice to the double-aspect of the notion of «onto-logy»: do justice to *being*, to reality, and do justice to *logic*; as compared to the mythological activity that, while it addressed the question of *being* and of appearance, did not embarrass itself with the logical character of its affirmations.

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<sup>88</sup> The significance of the distinction between reality and appearance seems to stem for Vuillemin from a necessity that is inherent to any discourse that seeks to communicate a truth or an ensemble of truths. The mere idea of truth seems however to suggest a certain logical or conceptual link with the idea of reality, reality about which the speaker says something that is truthful. In other words, any discourse that aims to express something true must ‘concentrate its attention’ on reality and not on something that is only *apparently* real. The source of the mythological failure on that level (even if the mythological discourse does aim to say the truth) seems to rely in the fact that a true discourse (simple or complex: whether we’re talking of a single proposition or of a body of propositions) must be regulated in terms of the fixation of the meaning of the signs that are used and in terms of the articulation of these different propositions. Philosophy (and science) frees itself from the difficulties that plagued the mythological discourse in terms of its construction, in the sense that it (philosophy) develops its discourse while respecting the regulations and demands of the axiomatic method (fixing the meaning of the philosophical system’s concepts, logically articulating the different theses of the system, and so on). What separates then the theoretical articulation of mythology from that of philosophy is what Vuillemin called a «complete revolution in the use of linguistic signs».

<sup>89</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 105.

The notion of systematicity for Vuillemin is hence linked with what Granger refers to when he speaks of the philosophical thought's responsibility to be «rigorous»: philosophical discourse *must prove to be rigorous*, and one of the 'proofs' of this rigor is its «submission to the rules of logic *stricto sensu*, that is to say, at least to propositional calculus»<sup>90</sup>. The notion of systematicity also takes for Vuillemin a third sense that Dummett does not explicitly mention, but that philosophy borrows from mythology, that is to say, the will to embrace the whole of reality: «philosophy may be said to be systematic in a second sense, which recalls and metamorphoses the universality of myth»<sup>91</sup>.

*C. Vuillemin: the philosophical effort beyond and in spite of the inevitable pluralism.*

Philosophical discourse hence constitutes itself as a system. It is constructed according to the demands and requirements of logic, and aims to offer a complete image of reality. We have here a pretty standard notion of what philosophy has traditionally done, but one element still lacks to offer a complete portrait of Vuillemin's conception of philosophy. I mentioned earlier, quoting Granger, that according to Vuillemin, philosophy «reorganizes representations that are already immanently organized in that they constitute our immediately lived experience, individually and collectively»<sup>92</sup>. One could however ask Vuillemin the following question: *No doubt, but Jules, how does this reorganizing process start? In other words: how does one start to philosophize? To construct a system?* This

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<sup>90</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», p. 61.

<sup>91</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 105.

<sup>92</sup> Gilles-Gaston Granger, «À quoi sert la philosophie?», p. 60.

question is crucial and Vuillemin's answer will help us to understand why he distances himself from thinkers like Dummett that defend the possibility of a philosophy that would follow the sure path of science<sup>93</sup>. This answer will also help us to understand the reason why Vuillemin believes, as it has been mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, that philosophy's field cannot be anything else than a battlefield, and why this field cannot one day become the land of philosophical peace.

### *C.1 Vuillemin's answer to the question.*

As I have said earlier, the philosopher is, for Vuillemin, this privileged character that is in a position to 'look at', to 'contemplate' the discourse or discourses of common sense, and to try to trace a line separating reality from appearance. But these discourses say A and non-A (for example, that man is free *and* that he is determined by his physical constitution, that the universe is matter *and* spirit, etc.), and the philosopher, to be able to submit their *own* discourse to the laws of logic, to be able to say the truth of reality, realizes that they must *choose*: «Between self-evident principles equally recommended by common sense but mutually inconsistent, a choice is imposed on philosophy»<sup>94</sup>. However, this choice, ultimately cannot be assured or cannot rest on a rational 'basis', in the sense that the recognition of this 'basis' is *already* the result of a *philosophical* decision about the nature of reason and of its interests. Philosophy is hence, in its simplest expression, a form of *engagement*, an impulse, setting in motion the philosopher's thought.

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1787.

<sup>94</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 105.

Philosophical discourse is hence, in this sense, the development of the logical consequences of a choice regarding a proposition or a group of propositions understood as universally valid<sup>95</sup>; and this choice is *determinant* in the sense that it determines what the philosopher will consider to be real and what they will consider to be mere appearance. One could say that, for Vuillemin, every book of philosophy should be opened with the following words: «If god could *say* the world, here is what He would say». The essential structure of the philosophical discourse is hence that of a conditional<sup>96</sup>; a conditional that aims above anything else at coherence and honesty in its starting point, and in the consequences that it (the starting point) generates.

It is therefore possible to understand why Vuillemin firmly believes that philosophy is born and can live only in contest<sup>97</sup>, and why it can only and necessarily lead (and that is its fundamental condition) to a plurality of philosophical positions: *because*, faced with the contradictions offered by the discourses of common sense, the philosopher must choose *where* they start their reflection on reality; *because*, this ‘where’ is an undetermined given, it cannot be otherwise, and that we can equally choose one or the other of the contradictory elements of common sense as a premise to our reflection; and finally *because* the choice of this or these premises is «a choice for which there cannot be, in last instance, a perfectly concluding determination in the same as a demonstration in mathematics: ‘I say that there is no rational decisional criterion in philosophy...»<sup>98</sup> It is hence possible, for different

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<sup>95</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 133.

<sup>96</sup> One could quote Paul Valéry: «The ‘if’ is an essential instrument for mental (philosophical) action».

<sup>97</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, p. 113.

<sup>98</sup> Pascal Engel, «Jules Vuillemin, les systèmes philosophiques, et la vérité», in P. Pellegrin & R. Rashed, *Philosophie des mathématiques et théorie de la connaissance, l’œuvre de Jules Vuillemin*, p. 33.

philosophers to choose different starting point to their reflection, meaning that it is possible, for different thinkers, to trace different frontiers separating reality from appearance, meaning finally that A might attack B concerning the logical development of a philosophical system (A might say that B's system is not coherent), but A cannot attack B concerning their *original* philosophical choice.

Throughout this chapter I have articulated Vuillemin's view that the nature of philosophy strongly depends upon the intellectual conditions of its birth. I have narrated the Greek context of philosophy's birth, that is to say, how philosophy emerged, with science and its use of the axiomatic method, from the mythological slumber of Greek thought. I have explained why Vuillemin sees philosophy as being an onto-logy, that is to say, a theoretical, systematic and logical enterprise aiming to trace a line separating reality from appearance; and finally, I have explained why Vuillemin believes that philosophy is essentially and unescapably *pluralistic*, in the sense that there cannot be something like a *grand reconciliation* of philosophy and of its different and contradictory theoretical tendencies and explanations.

«These days, the essential happens  
within the realms of abstraction,  
and to reality nothing is left but the accessory»  
-Robert Musil, in *L'homme sans qualité*

## CHAPTER II: Ludwig Wittgenstein or a *therapeutic* conception of philosophy

«*To idealize is also a form of suffering...*»

-Anonymous

«See to it that no one takes you captive through  
hollow and deceptive philosophy,  
which depends on human tradition  
and the elemental spiritual forces of this world...»

-St. Paul, *Epistle to the Colossians* 2; 8

«*Write. Purge. Heal.*»

-Anonymous

The aim of this second chapter will be to draw a portrait of what we could call a *therapeutic* conception of what philosophy *does*, or of what it *is*, that is, the conception of philosophy that has been defended and incarnated by Ludwig Wittgenstein. If, in the first chapter, I found it necessary to insist on the contingent character of the ‘Greek context’ out of which, according to Vuillemin, philosophy was born, contingency that deeply marked the morphology and the essential traits of philosophy (its theoretical, systematic and ontological character), this second chapter will have – in order to well understand what Wittgenstein means when he speaks of «philosophy» – to answer the following two questions: (i) *What is a philosophical problem or a philosophical question?*, and (ii) *What is a philosophical ‘solution’?*. Indeed, if there is one thing that determines the *nature* of philosophy for Wittgenstein, it is the source – or rather, the sources – and the causes of our philosophical problems, and the answer – or again, the answers – that one must give to them. This chapter will hence, in a certain sense, try to describe what one might call the *Alpha and Omega* of the philosophical activity according to Wittgenstein, that is to say: a

description of the emergence and of the vanishing (*disparition*) of our philosophical problems. Already, throughout the chapter, it will be possible to note certain sharp differences between the conception of philosophy defended by Vuillemin and Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy. It will however be the aim of the next chapter to explain these differences, as well as certain resemblances that exist nonetheless between these two conceptions.

Though before attacking these two questions, I should probably answer a possible objection or comment: for someone that is minimally familiar with Wittgenstein's oeuvre, it could seem bizarre to talk of philosophy understood as a «therapeutic activity», considering that this characterization of philosophy only explicitly emerges in what has been traditionally understood to be Wittgenstein's *second philosophy*, and considering also that this terminology is totally absent from his *first philosophy*<sup>99</sup>. Why then should one insist, as I will, on the terminology of the *second* Wittgenstein to describe a general conception of philosophy which would be that of both the first and the second Wittgenstein? Second point, stemming from the first: Am I not risking a distortion of the evolution and metamorphosis of Wittgenstein's thought by characterizing his conception of philosophy as being uniform, from beginning to end? Indeed, is not more reasonable to think that Wittgenstein, by abandoning the main theses that he defended in the *Tractatus*, also abandoned his *initial* conception of philosophy to defend a new one?

I would like to suggest that, on the contrary, if Wittgenstein abandoned the theses defended in the *Tractatus*, it is in part because he realized that the argument that he

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<sup>99</sup> Concerning this 'binary division' between first and second Wittgenstein (or between early and late Wittgenstein), see note 2.

developed in his first book did not do what a philosophical enterprise *should* or *must* do. In other words, Wittgenstein realized that the main theses of the *Tractatus* actually participated to the type of illusions to which the philosopher must resist (as I shall argue in this chapter). Hence, under a visible discontinuity of his thought lies a continuous philosophical «program», in the same way that, under the discontinuity of our clothing one single body is hidden. In this sense, I embrace Rush Rhees' (amongst others) opinion: «I dislike the reference to 'the philosophy of the early Wittgenstein' and 'the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein': as though we might say 'At one time his philosophy was this, but at a later time his philosophy was that'»<sup>100</sup>.

In the following chapter, I will try to do three things: (A) I will give a few indications regarding Wittgenstein's general intellectual background, indications that I find important and relevant when trying to understand Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. (B) I will try to map out an answer to the first question cited above: *what is a philosophical problem or a philosophical question?* Having done that, I will then try to explain the main *causes* of our philosophical questions and problems, according to Wittgenstein; in other words, the different reasons that makes the philosopher dive in the dangerous waters of philosophy. (C) Finally, I will try to articulate the therapy (as it is suggested in the title of this chapter) that the philosopher must go through to solve their philosophical troubles.

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<sup>100</sup> Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, p. 262.

*A. Wittgenstein's intellectual and philosophical background.*

From the time of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein considers that «all philosophy is a ‘critique of language’ (though not in Mauthner’s sense)»<sup>101</sup>, and this conviction will be constantly present throughout the evolution of his thought, from the *Tractatus* to the aphorisms of his last days, assembled in *On Certainty*. I chose this quote in particular, because it enables me to develop two linked ideas that – when one wants to understand what Wittgenstein *means* when he speaks of ‘philosophy’ – are interesting and important. **Firstly**, the parenthesis concerning Mauthner is important for the following reason: if Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy clearly stands out from what traditionally has been called ‘philosophy’, one must not believe that *that* conception is but a kind of philosophical (or antiphilosophical) *reaction* to *this* conception; also, one should not believe that the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy is an ‘immaculate conception’, or simply the fruitful product of the inspiration of a genius; for even the mind of a genius needs (intellectual) food to grow. To understand what Wittgenstein’s idea of what philosophy is, one must as much look in the direction of philosophers like Frege, Russell, Ramsey or Moore, as in the direction of philosophers and thinkers like Lichtenberg, Herder, Hamann and Mauthner, or Schlegel, Kraus, Freud, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Tolstoy<sup>102</sup>. Although Wittgenstein has been recognized as one of the most famous representatives of Anglo-American analytical philosophy, it is probably more exact to say that he, in fact, participates in an intellectual and philosophical tradition that emerged in Germany and in

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<sup>101</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.0031).

<sup>102</sup> Adrien-Paul Iliescu, *Wittgenstein: Why Philosophy is Bound to Err*, p. 11.

the Austro-Hungarian Empire. My aim is not to make a detailed presentation of the links or ‘family resemblances’ that exist between Wittgenstein and this second group of thinkers. But it is important to say the following: that most of these thinkers share a certain form of linguistic scepticism or suspicion, whether this suspicion is guided towards language *in general* (Nietzsche, or Mauthner), or towards certain of *our* uses of language (philosophical uses for Wittgenstein, political and journalistic uses for Kraus), and that this is something that greatly influenced Wittgenstein’s understanding of the task of philosophy.

If what Iliescu calls the Classical German Tradition of Language Criticism<sup>103</sup> does not entirely reject traditional philosophy as understood by Vuillemin – philosophy as an ontological or metaphysical enterprise – which it sometimes seems to do (I here have Nietzsche and Mauthner in mind), it would not however be completely false to say that this tradition, in a certain sense, *relocates* the fundamental interrogation of philosophy that Vuillemin speaks of (the interrogation concerning the separation of reality and appearance) *within* language itself. It would hence not be the world that lacks an explanation and that is problematic (although the world still remains an important source of philosophical worry): it is rather the *word*, or language itself that is put into question. The *philosophical demand*<sup>104</sup>, if such a thing exists, would hence have its origin in language, not in Being, or the world. In other words: the theoretical elaboration of an ontology philosophically depends upon a proper study of the tool which, in a certain sense, is the condition of the possibility of such an elaboration, that is to say, language. A language that, up until that

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<sup>103</sup> Adrien-Paul Iliescu, «Wittgenstein and the Classical German Tradition of Language Criticism» in *Wittgenstein: Why Philosophy is Bound to Err*, pp. 119-145.

<sup>104</sup> I borrow here the title of one of Bouveresse’s books: *La demande philosophique. Que veut la philosophie et que peut-on vouloir d’elle?*.

point, seemed to be of secondary importance in the best of cases – or simply taken for granted in the worst of cases – by traditional systematic philosophers.

**Secondly**, this *relocation* of the fundamental question of philosophy from the world to language is followed by, or implies – and that is, I think, what one should understand when reading Wittgenstein’s description of philosophy as a ‘critique of language’ – an equivalent change or reorientation regarding the task and obligations of the philosopher. For example, for Nietzsche, «there can no longer be philosophical systems *à l’ancienne*, because there can no longer be systems of knowledge as a whole, which was what philosophical systems pretended to be»<sup>105</sup>. The aim of philosophy will hence be to discern «behind these ornaments the powerful figure of the priest, the active organizer of reactive forces, the one who profits from nihilism, the captain who enjoys resentment»<sup>106</sup>. This discernment process will take the form of a genealogical critique of traditional, philosophical, and religious discourses, of their appeal to truth and totality, of their moralizing tone, etc. Mauthner will go even further than Nietzsche, embracing a radical form of «linguistic nihilism»<sup>107</sup>, pre-empting any and all attempts to erect an authentic ontology: «in the beginning was not the word, in the beginning was action. Knowledge is a knowledge of words. We only have words, we know nothing»<sup>108</sup>.

Meanwhile, Wittgenstein, although he shares with these thinkers a suspicious attitude towards language, will not go as far as to question our language’s capacity to

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<sup>105</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 1. La pluralité des systèmes philosophiques et la question de l’applicabilité du concept de vérité à la philosophie», in *Qu’est-ce qu’un système philosophique?*, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> Alain Badiou, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>107</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», in *Études de philosophie du langage*, p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> Fritz Mauthner, quoted by Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 4.

represent the facts of reality<sup>109</sup>. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what it can *mean, for us*, to say that language is *intrinsically* misleading, or mean (*mesquin*). In other words, what practical consequences can and must we draw from this philosophical *conclusion*, or thesis<sup>110</sup>? In what way can this ‘fact’ (that language is *intrinsically* misleading) help to awaken us from the illusion, from this dream that is language (that *every* language is?), and what would an ‘awaken language’ look like? Wittgenstein will however recognize that language does bring *us* to entertain certain confusions and illusions<sup>111</sup>, that it does sometimes *trip, stumble, and fall* (indeed, «even the most sublime object is diminished under the hands of human beings whenever they apply its idea to their use»<sup>112</sup>), and that if the critique that is philosophy must not (and if it in a certain sense cannot) attack language *in general*, it must however focus its attention, and if possible, eradicate these particular linguistic confusions and illusions.

*B. The Alpha of philosophy: the philosophical problem.*

For Aristotle, the source of philosophy is to be found in a feeling of wonder that stems in the philosopher when they are faced with existence, feeling without which «men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal»<sup>113</sup>; and this feeling pushes the philosopher to seek

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<sup>109</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 21.

<sup>111</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and Other Writings, p. 36.

<sup>113</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio. Encyclical Letter Concerning the Relationship Between Faith and Reason*, §4.

the ultimate causes of existence, that is to say, the essential structure of reality. Philosophy is hence rooted in an «*Urphilosophische Erfahrung*»<sup>114</sup>, in an ‘original philosophical experience’, wonder, that incites the philosopher to the deepest speculations, and to the deepest questions. For Wittgenstein, however, if philosophy has a ‘sentimental’ source, the feeling in question is not wonder, but rather a «*Beunruhigung*», a ‘preoccupation’ that besieges the mind of the philosopher and that places them in a very uncomfortable situation, a preoccupation that takes the traits of an obsession<sup>115</sup>.

This uncomfortable and properly philosophical preoccupation stems, according to Wittgenstein, and he will maintain this from beginning to end, from «our failure to understand the logic of our language»<sup>116</sup>. Having said that, Wittgenstein does not mean to say that we suffer from an *absence* of understanding of the logic of our language, but that we rather suffer from a *loss (perte)* of understanding of the logic of our language. The task of the philosopher is not then to answer to what would be an *absence* of understanding through the means of a philosophical *discovery* of the logic of our language, a logic that language would have *lacked up* until that point; rather, the *real* task of the philosopher, as compared to what one could think, or compared to what one could hope from philosophy, will be to *rediscover* the logic of our language. In other words: this situation of incomprehension which is that of the philosopher does not originate in a lack, or in some

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<sup>114</sup> Richard A. Gilmore, *Philosophical Health. Wittgenstein Method in «Philosophical Investigations»*, pp. 101-121.

<sup>115</sup> It is quite easy to see when reading the Wittgenstein’s notes at the time of the *Tractatus* that, if he does not say it openly as he will do so in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein nonetheless lived and experienced philosophical problems as obsessional preoccupations, preoccupations that demanded appeasement: Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Carnets de Cambridge et de Skjolden. 1930-1932, 1936-1937*.

<sup>116</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.003).

logical imperfection of which our language would be guilty, a lack that *only* the philosopher could remedy with their *redemptive* discourse; after all, as Bouveresse says, «language is innocent»<sup>117</sup>, and Wittgenstein repeatedly says that «logic must look after itself»<sup>118</sup>. Rather, it is the philosopher that loses sight of certain things concerning their language, that loses sight of, in a certain sense, *who they are* and *where they come from*, and that says that «*c'est ma langue que je ne sais plus reconnaître*»<sup>119</sup>; it is the philosopher who says also: «I don't know my way about»<sup>120</sup>.

Language, the relationship that it shares with the world, as well as the «success» of this relationship, are never put into question by Wittgenstein, and on this matter, he distances himself as much from Mauthner than from Russell and Frege. Mauthner indeed cultivates a form of radical scepticism concerning the possibility for language – he has in mind here ordinary language and also the technical developments of the sciences and of philosophy – to be a true ‘bearer of knowledge’ (epistemology would hence be a vain enterprise since it is devoid of any object: «we know nothing»), while Russell and Frege, faced with the limits, imprecision and equivocations of our ordinary language, try to construct a language that would be absolutely precise and univocal, that is to say, a *truly* logical and scientific language: «its regulations are far too liberal, its administration, too complacent, its organization, too relaxed, and its possibilities of movement, excessive. The latter must be submitted to severe restrictions that would eliminate *once and for all* the risks

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<sup>117</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse. De l'alchimie linguistique à la grammaire philosophique*, p. 299.

<sup>118</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (5.473).

<sup>119</sup> Gaston Miron, *L'homme rapaillé*, p. 126.

<sup>120</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§123).

of verbal confusion and illusion»<sup>121</sup>. Hence on one (Mauthner's) side, language is subjected to a radical and absolute doubt, while on the other (Russell and Frege's) side, it is considered to be an artisanal and imperfect instrument that must be replaced with a perfect and ideal precision tool<sup>122</sup>. Meanwhile, Wittgenstein, to those who would have doubt concerning the talents and capacities of language, will answer what Simon Peter answered to Jesus: «Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life»<sup>123</sup>, and his philosophical efforts will revolve around a very clear objective: to bring back philosophers to an evidence, that of the «good nature»<sup>124</sup> of language.

This form of «linguistic rousseauism»<sup>125</sup> is a thing that will pervade Wittgenstein's thought, from beginning to end. One must not however understand this «rousseauism» as being a theoretical, philosophical stance concerning language, as opposed to, for example, Mauthner's linguistic nihilism; one must rather understand it as a wise *practical attitude* towards language. Indeed, a theoretical Rousseauism, as much as a theoretical Hobbesianism *à la Mauthner*, is senseless for Wittgenstein: «the idea of a sort of linguistic *malin génie*, of a fundamental insufficiency or perversion of our language is for him [Wittgenstein] senseless, because we cannot draw from this type of hypothesis any practical consequence»<sup>126</sup>. In that perspective, the idea of a benevolent linguistic god is equally devoid of any «practical consequence», and hence, in a certain sense, is equally senseless, and dangerous. The attitude towards language *in general* that Wittgenstein proposes could

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<sup>121</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 10.

<sup>122</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion. Wittgenstein on Philosophy and the Metaphysics of Experience*, p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> *Gospel of St. John* (6;68).

<sup>124</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 21.

<sup>125</sup> Erich Heller, «Wittgenstein: Unphilosophical Notes», in K.T. Fann (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Man and His Philosophy*, p. 104.

<sup>126</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 21

be characterized as a form of ‘prudent confidence’ (*confiance prudente*): to accept language as being an integral part of – and largely structuring – our form of life, while being conscious of the risks that language brings along with it.

This enables us to understand what we could call the *hidden agenda* guiding the Tractarian sentences, or at least, it informs us on what this agenda *is not*: the *Tractatus* does not aim to articulate or to *say* the structures of an ideal and perfect language, but rather to *show* the structures of *any* and *every* possible language, including those of our ordinary language. Indeed, from the time of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein will say that «all of the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order»<sup>127</sup>. Russell, amongst others, will overlook these types of declarations and this will lead him to fundamentally misunderstand Wittgenstein’s true philosophical intentions: «In the part of his theory which deals with Symbolism he is concerned with the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language (...) – not that any language is logically perfect, or that we believe ourselves capable, here and now, of constructing a logically perfect language, but that the whole function of language is to have a meaning, and it only fulfills this function in proportion, as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate»<sup>128</sup>. This extract from Russell’s introduction to the *Tractatus* illustrates, not only the divergence in philosophical opinion existing between Russell and Wittgenstein on the local question of our ordinary language’s *value*, from a logical point of view; it also enables us to put the finger on what Wittgenstein found to be absurd in Russell’s own philosophical project: «The apparatus constructed by the philosophers who want to «redo» (*refaire*)

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<sup>127</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (5.5563).

<sup>128</sup> Bertrand Russell, «Introduction» in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. 7.

language is not a machine that would work ideally in real conditions; it is rather ideal in the very sense that it does not work»<sup>129</sup>. The philosophical efforts deployed by Russell to construct a perfect language can hence be seen as an attempt to «substitute an empirical mechanism that fulfills its normal function to the general satisfaction of everyone by an ideal, on-paper schema, not seeing that the legitimate use that we could eventually make of this schema is completely different from our use of the real machine»<sup>130</sup>.

The linguistic Rousseauism that Wittgenstein entertains will be formulated even more explicitly in his *Philosophical Investigations*: «When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?*— And how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have!»<sup>131</sup> The abandonment of the technical and *heavily* philosophical vocabulary that characterized the pages of the *Tractatus*, doubled with the confessed (or unmasked) abandonment of any ambition towards the elaboration of a general theory of meaning will greatly annoy Russell, and this will bring him to say of Wittgenstein's later philosophy that it «serves, in the best of cases, as a weak auxiliary to lexicography, and is, in the worst of cases, an idle distraction for tea time»<sup>132</sup>, and that it is nothing else than a «pathetic exhortation to intellectual laziness»<sup>36</sup>. Wittgenstein's belief in the «good nature» of language enables us to come back to our main object, that is to say the real nature of our philosophical problems. Indeed, if our ordinary language is truly complete, that is to say, if it is truly logical, it therefore means

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<sup>129</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 10.

<sup>130</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 10.

<sup>131</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§120).

<sup>132</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Histoire de mes idées philosophiques*, p. 271. (The translation is mine.)

that any attempt to ‘complete’ it, or to ‘replace’ it, or to ‘reject’ it, is to be understood as an absurd and superfluous enterprise, a nonsensical one, which will lead Wittgenstein to say that «most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. (...) Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language»<sup>133</sup>.

As I have said earlier, one of the ideas that pervades the entirety of Wittgenstein’s thought, as much in the *Tractatus* than in the *Investigations*, is the idea that philosophy is a ‘critique of language’. And as David Pears points out in his *Wittgenstein* (1971), this critique greatly resembles the Kantian critique: in the same way that the Kantian critique aimed at tracing the limits of thought, the Wittgensteinian critique aims to trace the limits of our language. In other words, it aims to trace the frontiers separating sense from nonsense. However, if this frontier in the *Tractatus* is determined (and fixed) by the fact that language shares with the world a common logical structure – «My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world»<sup>134</sup> –, if then this frontier is uniform and rigid (because, in a certain sense, it is imposed by the ‘nature of the world’), in the *Investigations*, this frontier will be, so to say, *scattered* in the midst of *our* linguistic practices<sup>135,136</sup>. In a certain sense, it is *as if* the *Tractatus* aims at tracing the frontiers of a

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<sup>133</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.003).

<sup>134</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916* (2.8.1916).

<sup>135</sup> The emphasis on the word ‘our’ as much stresses the ‘plurality’ of these practices as it stresses the fact they are ‘ours’.

<sup>136</sup> Indeed, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the attempt made in the *Tractatus* to give an uniformed image of language, an image of language as doing *one* thing: «It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*)» (§23). As Bouveresse says in *La parole malheureuse*: «there are as many functions of language as there are language games and in a certain sense language does not exist, only language games do» (p. 25).

country according to the immutable, *already there* elements of a natural geography (a country would hence be limited by a mountain chain, by a river, by a forest, etc.), while the *Investigations* aims at doing the same thing, but by replacing this work of delimitation in the midst of our ‘form of life’; meaning that this work would be accomplished in a given cultural, political, diplomatic, social, economic, etc., context that would determine in part the traits of our linguistic practices and the way by which we give meaning to our words. It would hence be impossible to foresee the fluctuations and transformations that these frontiers *will* go through; and it would be even more impossible and senseless to fixate, *a priori* and *once and for all* the place (*lieu*) of these frontiers separating sense from nonsense, which was the aim of the *Tractatus*.

Who says ‘frontier’, or ‘limit’, also says ‘transgression’ and ‘illicit vagabondage’, and it is well in these terms that we must, according to Wittgenstein, qualify the things that philosophers have said: «The objects of the material world participate to the Ideas», «God exists», «The morally right action is the one that produces the most good for the most people», «Reality is rational», «Philosophy is an activity that creates concepts», but also, «The world is all that is the case», and «A proposition is a picture of reality». The philosopher is hence according to Wittgenstein, one who is brought to cross the frontiers delimiting the territory of language, thinking that by doing so, they are discovering unknown lands (*terres jusqu’à-là inconnues*), when in fact, we would be much closer to the truth by comparing them to Don Quixote, who believes that he is fighting giants when he is in fact brandishing his rusty sword towards indifferent windmills. The philosopher is, however, in a much worse position than Don Quixote, for if the latter finds in his delusions a *home* in which he can exercise and live his chivalrous impulses, if he has *l’esprit*

*tranquille* (tranquillity of mind) in the sense that his delusions enable him to be what he believes he *must* be (a knight), if then these chivalrous delusions become for Don Quixote, in a certain sense, a *language*, complete and logical, the philosopher on the other hand is tormented precisely by the fact that he or she is the prisoner of a problem, dispossessed of any *home*, and frustrated by their less than convincing attempts at building one.

This feeling of frustration, this preoccupation about the *real* signification of a concept like «Freedom» or «Good» is, maybe, in fact, but one of the two sides of the coin that is the «original philosophical experience» that I mentioned earlier, the other side manifesting itself in the shapes of *doubt*, doubt about the talents and capacities of language in general, or about our language in its most daily and ordinary traits. Indeed, as Nietzsche says, «language is the most familiar thing of all; one really needs to be a philosopher to occupy oneself with it» («*Le langage est la chose la plus quotidienne de toutes: il faut être un philosophe pour s'en occuper*»), and what pushes the philosopher to occupy themselves with language – «occupy» in any sense of the term: «take care of», «pass the time», «colonize», etc. – is the fact that the philosopher begins to entertain doubts concerning what language *can* do: «The problem is fundamentally one of doubting, of doubting the reliability of one's words, of doubting the 'content' of one's thought. It is, therefore, fundamentally a sceptical problem»<sup>137</sup>. Now, if the original impulse of philosophy is 'sentimental', and if the original philosophical feeling is not wonder, but rather, as Wittgenstein says it is, preoccupation, and finally, if this preoccupation is coupled with doubt concerning our language, it seems important to state more precisely what leads the

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<sup>137</sup> Richard A. Gilmore, *Philosophical Health*, p. 103.

philosopher to doubt, what leads them to «take care of language», and what leads them to get lost within their own language (*perdre son chemin au sein de son propre langage*)<sup>138</sup>. An exploration of what one could call the main<sup>139</sup> ‘philosophical hallucinogens’ will not only help us to better understand what Wittgenstein means to say when he talks of philosophical ‘illusions’ or ‘confusions’, but will also enable us to measure *one of the distances* separating the *Tractatus* from the *Investigations*. If, as I have said earlier, «under a visible discontinuity of his thought lies a continuous philosophical «program», in the same way that, under the discontinuity of our clothing one single body is hidden», it is nonetheless important to recognize that there are, between these two periods, differences in emphases and focus on one or the other of these hallucinogens, differences that I will point out *dans un second temps*.

### *B.1 Philosophical Hallucinogens.*

*Confusion between the grammatical surface and the logical depth.* In a footnote to his book *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell explains his reasons for rejecting Hegelian logic: «Hegel's argument in this portion of his *Logic* depends throughout upon confusing the "is" of predication, as in "Socrates is mortal", with the "is" of identity, as in "Socrates is the philosopher who drank the hemlock". Owing to this confusion, he thinks that "Socrates" and "mortal" must be identical. Seeing that they are different, he does not infer, as others would, that there is a mistake somewhere, but that they exhibit "identity in difference." Again, Socrates is particular, "mortal" is universal. Therefore, he says, since

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<sup>138</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 299.

<sup>139</sup> This ‘list’ does not pretend to be complete, nor exclusive: Cf. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, Chapter V.

Socrates is mortal, it follows that the particular is the universal taking the "is" to be throughout expressive of identity. But to say "the particular is the universal" is self-contradictory. Again Hegel does not suspect a mistake but proceeds to synthesize particular and universal in the individual, or concrete universal. This is an example of how, for want of care at the start, vast and imposing systems of philosophy are built upon stupid and trivial confusions, which, but for the almost incredible fact that they are unintentional, one would be tempted to characterize as puns»<sup>140</sup>. Russell explains the distraction (*égarement*) of the Hegelian logic by the fact that it attributes to the two different instances of the verb «To be» («Socrates *is* mortal» and «Socrates *is* the philosopher who drank the hemlock») the same logical function when in fact they do not at all play the same logical role, the first being a «'is' of predication», while the second is a «'is' of identity». Hegel would hence have been misguided, in his reasoning, by the *apparent* grammatical similitude between the two propositions, losing sight of their *real* logical difference, thereby constructing a faulty syllogism.

(*Digression*). In the first moments of this chapter, I mentioned that it would not be completely false to say that the Classical German Tradition of Language Criticism that Iliescu talks about *relocates* what Vuillemin considers to be the fundamental question of philosophy (the interrogation concerning the separation of reality from mere appearance), relocating it *within* language. I also mentioned that this *relocation* leads to a reorientation of the task of the philosopher: the latter no longer aims at tracing the essential traits of reality, and is no longer inhabited by the desire to submit the world by locking it up in a

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<sup>140</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, pp.48-49, footnote 1.

system<sup>141</sup>; the task of the philosopher rather becomes an essentially *critical* one and, in a certain sense, a *negative* one, in the sense that the philosopher will try to separate the legitimate claims to truth from the illegitimate ones, claims made by philosophy, by religion, by politics, etc. The two most subversive representatives of this tradition, Nietzsche and Mauthner, will however trace the line *a little too far*, in the sense that they do not attack specific and particular claims to truth; they rather attack the very notion of ‘claim to truth’ made through language. As it has been mentioned earlier on, Mauthner develops a radical form of linguistic nihilism according to which language *cannot* be a tool of knowledge: «there are no truths, in the sense that we generally imagine: there are only things that we believe and things that we do not believe»<sup>142</sup>. If, according to Mauthner, the ills of language are not curable through means of language, it seems that the only possible remedy – and it is an absolutely radical one – is complete and total silence<sup>143</sup>. Although the Nietzschean critique follows that of Mauthner in terms of its radical character – «language is systematically misleading because it simplifies and schematizes, because it introduces an order, constancies and regularities where, in reality, there are none»<sup>144</sup> – the remedy that he proposes is in no way as radical and as overwhelming as the diagnosis: indeed, if language is a lie that we systematically tell to ourselves, Nietzsche’s proposition is to reconcile ourselves with this lie, to lie joyfully, to lie in a matter that is creative and artistic<sup>145</sup>. The cure is hence not to be found in the linguistic formulation of particular truths

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<sup>141</sup> Robert Musil, *L’homme sans qualité*, p. 304.

<sup>142</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 9.

<sup>143</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 6.

<sup>144</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 9.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Introduction théorique sur la vérité et le mensonge au sens extra-moral*.

(and even less so, in the formulation of universal truths), but in a *truthful* relationship with language, henceforth understood and recognized as being the place of illusion; an illusion that *I* must make *mine*: «the lie uttered for the sake of pleasure is no longer a lie, and only art is capable of lying for the sake of pleasure, only art is capable to say the truth»<sup>146</sup>.

The linguistic status of these critical remarks, the fact that they are articulated by the means of this tool – language – that is *de facto* guilty, is of course problematic: how can one talk of *language* in a meaningful and truthful way, without falling back into the linguistic illusion that one aims to denounce? I mention this to show, even if it is only in a schematic and minimal matter, that the radicality of these critiques of language does not change the fact that they represent a philosophical position that has a fragile and limited status<sup>147</sup>. Also, and this enables me to come back to our business, I find these remarks to be important and interesting when trying to *situate* the critiques of language that will be articulated by the ‘Founding Fathers’ of analytic philosophy, that is to say, Frege, Russell, and in particular, Wittgenstein. If Nietzsche and Mauthner’s aim is language *in general*, it is difficult to understand what these critiques can mean for *us*, linguistic creatures, and what we are supposed to draw from them: yes, those critiques inform us of the fact that language drowns us in a state of profound sleep, but how can we talk of *sleep* when there is no possibility for us to wake up. The ‘Founding Fathers’ will be, on this level, *less metaphysical* in the sense that, according to them, «the fact that language can give rise to confusions and illusions that necessitate an effort in philosophical clarification does not

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<sup>146</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 10.

<sup>147</sup> I do not want to spend too much time on this question, knowing that my claim would demand a long, articulated and complex treatment.

constitute an argument in favour of a form or another of linguistic scepticism or pessimism»<sup>148</sup>. Indeed, this kind of reasoning seems to suggest something similar to saying that when we walk, we don't *really* move because, sometimes, when we walk, we trip and fall, or some other times, we walk on the spot. The 'Founding Fathers', on the contrary, do not question our capacity to articulate linguistic propositions that are true<sup>149</sup>. They are rather interested by the necessary and sufficient conditions for the articulation of these propositions, and in this sense, they showed great interest for the question «what *is* a proposition?». Hence, if the tradition of language criticism relocated the frontier separating reality from appearance from the world to language, the 'Fathers' are the ones that truly rearticulate and change the terms in which we understand this frontier: the frontier aims at separating, in the midst of our linguistic uses, or meaningful uses from our meaningless ones; to separate our legitimate linguistic gestures from those which are not. The primordial sin will hence not be to say something that is false, but to speak nonsense.

This enables us to come back to the distinction, discussed earlier on, between the *grammatical surface* of our statements and their *logical depth*. Indeed, if the 'Fathers' tried to trace a frontier separating what is meaningful from what is meaningless, the essential or cardinal problem of philosophy will be that of the *proposition*: what is common to all propositions, to all meaningful linguistic statements? The initial answer that will be given to this question will take the form of an oscillation between rejection and approval: a rejection of the *content* of the Aristotelian answer, and an approval of the *form* of Aristotle's answer; *the form of the answer* being: what is common to all propositions is the fact that

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<sup>148</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Langage et illusion», pp. 4-5

they all share a certain *logical form* or *structure*. Aristotle had identified this structure as being essentially predicative, as having the form ‘S is P’, and this predicative form has been accepted or taken for granted by the philosophical tradition up until, notably, Frege and Russell, at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>150</sup>. Although Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein offer different answers regarding the *content* of the logical structure of the proposition, the common ground to their respective answers is their rejection of the Aristotelian predicative form; not because it would be *false*, but rather because it is limited and because it «misses some important distinctions»<sup>151</sup>. What remains however, is the idea that all propositions share a certain logical form and that the presence or the absence of such a form is the ultimate criterion when trying to determine whether a statement is meaningful or not.

Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein’s quest of the logical structure of the proposition demands and requires, and this is a crucial point, a particular form of attention to the mode of expression of our propositions, that is to say, to their mode of grammatical presentation, and a particular attention also to the fact that this mode of grammatical presentation can easily lead us astray. Indeed, the Aristotelian predicative form, and it is one of its dangers, is greatly rooted in our ordinary ways of speaking: «Patrick is gone», «Patrick is a student», «Patrick is in love», etc., these three propositions have a similar grammatical surface and *can* easily be understood as sharing a common logical form: ‘S is P’. What is however neglected or forgotten is the *nature* of the predicate that is attributed to the subject. Understanding these propositions as sharing a same logical form leads us to oversee the

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<sup>150</sup> Arthur Sullivan, «Introduction» in *Logicism and the Philosophy of Language*, pp. 45-53

<sup>151</sup> Arthur Sullivan, «Introduction», p. 53.

logical differences that exist between these three predicates. Or again, «God exists» and «Pink Floyd’s last album rocks my socks off»: the similar grammatical surface of these two propositions hides the fact that, as Kant showed<sup>152</sup>, existence is not a predicate that we can attribute to a given subject, in the same way that we could say of my hair that it is brown. To say «God exists» is a way to affirm «the non-emptiness of a certain set – i.e., at least one thing falls under the concept ‘( ) is God’ – and it is a presupposition for attributing any properties to anything in that set»<sup>153</sup>. In other words, even though these two statements share a common grammatical form, the first is actually a semi-proposition (hence, it is not a proposition at all), and resembles a mathematical ‘equation’ like «5 + ». The logical reality of the proposition is hence separated from its grammatical mode of apparition. Furthermore, the grammatical appearance often hides the logical reality of the proposition, a reality that is hence far from being evident: «Language disguises thought. So much, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it»<sup>154</sup>. And it is precisely the hidden character of the true logical form that necessitates a particular type of philosophical effort, a work of logical clarification, which leads Wittgenstein to say: «the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of “philosophical propositions”, but

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, «Des preuves fondamentales de la raison spéculative qui servent à conclure l’existence d’un Être suprême» and «De l’impossibilité d’une preuve ontologique de l’existence de Dieu» in *Critique de la raison pure*, pp. 421-430.

<sup>153</sup> Arthur Sullivan, «Introduction», p. 51.

<sup>154</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.002).

to make propositions clear. Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred»<sup>155</sup>. (*End of the digression*).

This opposition between «apparent logical form» and «real logical form» is explicitly retaken by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (*TLP*, 4.0031), and in the *Investigations* (*PI*, §664), although the meaning of this opposition and what it demands in terms of philosophical work will of course vary. At the time of the *Tractatus*, although the propositions of our everyday language are well in order (*TLP*, 5.5563), hence although they are logical, this does not necessarily mean that this ‘logical order’ is accessible and visible to the eye of the ‘profane’: indeed, «Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is – just as people speak without knowing how the individual sounds are produced»<sup>156</sup>. For Wittgenstein, this logical order is *a little bit like* the roots of a tree: even though it is they that give life to the trunk and its branches, they are nonetheless hidden and buried. The point to remember is that there is a gap between the real logical form of a given proposition – that is to say, the fact that this proposition is a picture of reality – and its apparent grammatical form, and that it is from this gap that a good part of our philosophical problems comes<sup>157</sup>. For example, someone who, like Hegel, speaks philosophically without paying enough attention to the different logical functions of the words he uses will produce nonsense. This gap between ‘apparent form’ and ‘real form’ leads the philosopher to deduce absurd conclusions from valid premises; but this possible confusion is not only to

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<sup>155</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.112).

<sup>156</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.002).

<sup>157</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 13.

be found in the philosophical developments that the philosopher calls ‘answer’: it can also pervade the philosophical development at its source, that is to say: it is well possible that what is perceived as an authentic philosophical problem is in fact but a pseudo-problem, *because* the pseudo-problem and the real problem share a similar grammatical form. For example, the question «Is the cat in the room?» shares with the question «Is Beauty in the painting?», or «Is God in the world?», a similar grammatical form that could push a philosopher to answer «yes» or «no», an answer accompanied by a such or such form of justification: «But of course! Beauty is in the painting! After all, it is the painting that is beautiful, and not my eye!», or «But of course not! Beauty is in the eye of the beholder! After all, beauty is merely a question of taste!». The apparent logical form of these ‘questions’ confines the philosopher in a *cul-de-sac*, and makes him prisoner of a, so to say, *geographical* dichotomy, since the controversy revolves around the *location* of beauty (is beauty *in* the eye, or *in* the work of art?); a dichotomy only suggested by the form of the question, a form that masks its own non-sense. Borrowing Wittgenstein’s example: «They (most of our philosophical questions and propositions) belong to the same class as the question whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful»<sup>158</sup>.

In the *Investigations*, the distinction between ‘superficial grammar’ and ‘deep grammar’ is maintained, but the axis of reference of the whole work of investigations has been turned<sup>159</sup>. The superficial grammar makes us lose sight of «the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything

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<sup>158</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.003).

<sup>159</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§108).

alike.»<sup>160</sup>. If, in the *Tractatus*, the superficial grammar keeps us from seeing if a phrase is *really* a proposition (in the technical sense of the term), that is to say, if a phrase is *really* a picture of reality, in the *Investigations*, this is no longer the (only) question: superficial grammar «frequently leads us to misunderstand the use of words»<sup>161</sup>, and after all, «the meaning of a word is its use in the language»<sup>162</sup>. A word hence has, for the *second* Wittgenstein, a signification, insofar as we use it, and not because it would be intrinsically meaningful, significant, signifying, or useful: «The *truth* is that counting has proved to pay. – ‘Then do you want to say that ‘being true’ means: being usable (or useful)?’ – No, not that; but that it can’t be said of the series of natural numbers – any more than of our language – that it is true, but that it is usable, and above all, *it is used*»<sup>163</sup>. That being said, the superficial grammar keeps us from seeing the effective use of our concepts and also, the variety of these usages. For example, the idea that to all substantive must correspond a ‘substance’; which leads us naturally to ask, in the same way that we would ask the question «What is a horse?», «What is Justice?». Some, like Plato, would answer by reference to an Idea or Form of Justice, and others, seeing the difficulties of such a position will answer that there is no such ‘thing’ as a ‘substance’ called ‘Justice’. For Wittgenstein, these two attitudes are sickly in the sense that the philosophers believes, *unjustly*, that we must answer the question «What is Justice?», due to its grammatical similitude with the question «What is a horse?», in the same way, that is to say, with a definition that would be able encompass

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<sup>160</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (II-xi), p. 314. One should note the resemblance of this passage with *TLP* (4.002): «Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes».

<sup>161</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 129.

<sup>162</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§43).

<sup>163</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, I, 4, pp. 37-38.

all of our different uses of the word «Justice»; and if such a definition could not be found, that this would lead us to believe that the word «Justice» is *in reality* senseless. But, «consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". (...) – Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: *don't think, but look!*»<sup>164</sup>. Hence, whether at the time of the *Tractatus*, or at the time of the *Investigations*, «distrust of grammar is the first requisite for philosophizing»<sup>165</sup>. The philosopher cannot simply hover over the waters of language<sup>166</sup>: they must explore its depths, whether we are talking of the depths of logical analysis (*Tractatus*), or the depths of our linguistic uses (*Philosophical Investigations*).

*Temptation of an image too strong for a weak mind.* The origin of the second form of philosophical confusion can be found, ironically maybe, in the metaphor that Wittgenstein uses to talk about language in the *Investigations*: «Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses»<sup>167</sup>. *If* we take this image seriously, it is not rare at all to talk of place as being an *iconic place* (*lieu inconique*), for example, Signal Hill in St. John's, the Olympic Stadium in Montréal, or the Eiffel Tower in Paris, even though these places are on the same *logical* plane as the other places, in the sense that they

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<sup>164</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§66) (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>165</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Notes on Logic. September 1913», in *Notebooks 1914-1916*, p. 93.

<sup>166</sup> *Book of Genesis* (1;2)

<sup>167</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§18).

are but *one place amongst many others* in a given city (*ces lieux ne sont qu'un lieu parmi d'autres dans la ville en question*). They are nonetheless considered, for a number of reasons (touristic attraction, historical importance, funny or horrible anecdote, etc.) – reasons that are contingent and, up to a certain point, accidental –, as being «important», «legendary», «must-see», «unavoidable», etc. In the same way, there are certain images or expressions in our language that have become important for a number of reasons that are, according to Wittgenstein, accidental and contingent. The error of the philosopher for Wittgenstein is to take these images *too seriously* (*why so serious?*, he asks), to take them out of their contingent, historical, accidental and contextual environment, and to give them all the *weight* of 'philosophical necessity'. It is not the importance of these images and expressions that Wittgenstein is putting into question (after all, why should he care if the Eiffel Tower is important or not!), but rather, the *swelling* of this importance into something *more*, into necessity: «The correctness of such pictures qua pictures, is not in dispute; it is rather their application which is»<sup>168</sup>.

An example maybe: those who, when concerned with questions of political philosophy, think that a political problem can only be *truly* understood and resolved when we study it through the right-left paradigm. The comprehension and the resolution of a political problem would hence *necessarily* be linked to this comprehensive paradigm, which becomes, in a certain sense, the *logical space of politics*. However, these persons forget that the expression 'right-left' has a rather short history, and that to talk of necessity here is quite a difficult thing to justify or defend: the distinction *appears* indeed during the

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<sup>168</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 132.

*Première Assemblée nationale constituante* of 1789, as partisans of a royal veto sat to the ‘right’ of the president of the Assembly, while opponents sat at his ‘left’. Although, yes, the expression ‘right-left’ is very important if one wants to understand our current political situation(s), it is not, however, a sign of wisdom, according to Wittgenstein, to deduce from this importance the idea that this analytic-conceptual framework is *necessary*, or *true*, and it is even less a sign of wisdom to think that *we* could not try to understand politics through another framework. To partisans of such ideas, Wittgenstein would probably say: «How would *we* talk of politics if the chamber of the *Assemblée constituante* of 1789 had been round? Or triangular? Or...?» What we have to keep in mind here is the following: it is not because an idea is important, or useful, that it is *necessary*, and even less, that it is *necessarily true*. As Rorty says: «images rather than propositions, metaphors rather than affirmations, determine most of our philosophical convictions»<sup>169</sup>

*Scientific temptation of philosophy*. In 1914, in a conference honouring the thought of Herbert Spencer<sup>170</sup>, Russell says that traditional philosophers have made two types of mistakes: firstly, a series of thinkers have conceived philosophy has being a way to answer an ensemble of questions emanating from ethical or religious considerations and motivations, having in mind thinkers like Plato, Spinoza and Hegel (*On the Scientific Method in Philosophy*, p. 97). However, these motivations, according to Russell, lure us away from what is (or should be) an even more fundamental motivation, as we *should* be motivated by Truth: too easily, ethics become moralizing, and all too easily, religion

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<sup>169</sup> Richard Rorty, *L’homme spéculaire*, p. 22.

<sup>170</sup> Bertrand Russell, «On Scientific Method in Philosophy», in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*, pp. 97-124.

becomes dogmatic, and possibly violent<sup>171</sup>. There is secondly a series of philosophers - like Leibniz, Locke and Hume - that, although they were motivated by properly scientific considerations, could not guide philosophy on what Kant called the «certain path of science». Indeed, they have, according to Russell, tried to encompass the *results* of the sciences of their time in an even more general philosophical discourse, while they should have concentrated their attention on the scientific *method*, which is what philosophy should do: «it is not results, but *methods* that can be transferred with profit from the sphere of the special sciences to the sphere of philosophy. What I wish to bring to your notice is the possibility and importance of applying to philosophical problems certain broad principles of method which have been found successful in the study of scientific questions»<sup>172</sup>. For Russell, the future of philosophy can only be bright if philosophy rejects its religious and ethical *pathos*, as well as the philosophical and methodological wanderings that they bring along with them; philosophy must on the contrary borrow a method that has made its mark, that is to say, the method of the natural sciences.

If very quickly, Russell and Wittgenstein both agreed on what has to be the object of philosophical studies, «the logical form of scientific propositions»<sup>173</sup>, for Russell, the philosophical enterprise, mirroring the scientific enterprise and its method, must be «piecemeal and tentative (...); above all, it will be able to invent hypotheses which, even if they are not wholly true, will yet remain fruitful after the necessary corrections have been

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. Jacques Bouveresse, *Que peut-on faire de la religion?* (2011), in which Bouveresse exposes Russell's critique of organized religion.

<sup>172</sup> Bertrand Russell, «On Scientific Method in Philosophy», p. 98.

<sup>173</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Notes on Logic. September 1913», p. 170

made»<sup>174</sup>. Wittgenstein, in 1915, barely a year after Russell's conference, condemns univocally the Russellian program of a scientific philosophy: «Russell's method in his 'Scientific method in philosophy' is simply a retrogression from the method of physics»<sup>175</sup>.

Indeed, for Wittgenstein, the scientific proposition is a picture of reality. The philosophical enterprise of a scientific proposition, however, is not interested in the proposition's 'factual content'; it is rather interested in what precedes the truth or the falsehood of a proposition, that is to say, the fact that we can give meaning to that proposition: «What corresponds in reality to a proposition depends upon whether it is true or false. But we must be able to understand a proposition without knowing if it is true or false. What we know when we understand a proposition is this: we know what is the case if it is true and what is the case if it is false. But we do not necessarily know whether it is actually true or false»<sup>176</sup>. If the pictures of reality, like a photograph, can be more or less precise, or clear, the «relation of depicting that holds between language and the world»<sup>177</sup> cannot be unclear or fuzzy, «for what would be a mere approximation in science would be nonsense in philosophy»<sup>178</sup>. The *groping (tâtonnante)*, experimental and gradual method of science cannot be that of philosophy. This impossibility will be even more abrupt and real in the *Tractatus* (as compared to the «Notes on Logic» of 1913) in the sense that, although the object of philosophy remains unchanged, philosophy is no longer considered

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<sup>174</sup> Bertrand Russell, «On Scientific Method in Philosophy», p. 113.

<sup>175</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916* (1.5.1915).

<sup>176</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Notes on logic. September 1913», pp. 170-171. Cf. *TLP* (4.024).

<sup>177</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.014).

<sup>178</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 9.

by Wittgenstein to be the «doctrine of the logical form», because logic cannot be said, it can only be *shown*<sup>179</sup>.

Hence, from the time of the *Tractatus*, the philosophical enterprise is totally separated from the scientific enterprise, separation that will be reaffirmed by Wittgenstein's later distinction between empirical, scientific problems, and conceptual, philosophical problems. The *second* Wittgenstein will, in a certain way, go even further, in the sense that even the idea of talking about *the* logical structure of language<sup>180</sup> (which is essential thesis of the *Tractatus*) will be understood as participating to the scientific temptation: this idea pushes us to think of language as *one* thing, unified and uniform, while language should actually be seen or approached as a tool box, containing many tools having different functions<sup>181</sup>. However, from beginning to end, Wittgenstein strongly considered the very idea of a 'scientific philosophy' to be a pure (and dangerous) illusion for the philosopher and for philosophy itself.

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<sup>179</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.121) and mostly (4.1212): «What can be shown, *cannot* be said». The reason for this is that seems to stem from Wittgenstein's pictorial theory of the proposition (see pp. 104-106). Indeed, the proposition is a picture of a fact ('the snow is white' is a picture of the fact that the snow is white). However the 'picturing activity' of the proposition (which depends on logic) is not itself *in* the proposition, as one of its elements. Rather, Wittgenstein says, it shows itself *through* the proposition. Let's turn to the photographic analogy. I take a picture of a cat. Now, in the picture (of my cat), there is my cat. But what you don't see is me taking the picture. You could of course imagine that someone takes a picture of me taking a picture of my cat. But then, the same problem emerges again: that someone taking the picture is not in the picture, and so on. The 'proof' of the 'picturing activity' a proposition is in the pudding, so to say. Indeed, to try to talk about language would not be a metalinguistic gesture, but would remain a gesture that is made *within* language and would not say anything *about* language. To say it bluntly: to speak about language, one would have to be outside of it, but this is impossible; we do not have access to this *outside*. We can however see the logic of language in the use we make of it and in the way that we are well able to speak about facts of the world. In other words, to speak about logic would be to give another example of it, but this would have no value in terms of an explanation of logic (which is what a philosophy of logic would claim to do).

<sup>180</sup> And even more so, the idea that this structure of language is identical to that of the world.

<sup>181</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§11).

*Natural and metaphysical temptation of reason.* I alluded earlier to the Kantian resonance of the Wittgensteinian critique of language. The Kantian enterprise indeed starts with the idea that traditional metaphysical thought has wandered, that it *bit off more than it could chew*, by trying to erect a scientific discourse on what can only be an object for faith: «Kant's critique of speculative reason denied knowledge to make room for faith»<sup>182</sup>. In other words, the Kantian critique aimed at showing the *limited* character of thought and its incapability to think the infinite, to think what does not have the lineaments of the object, hence its incapability to do something more or better than thinking<sup>183</sup>, which is what speculative reason tried to do before Kant. However, this critique does recognize that there is, for humanity, such a natural tendency towards the idea of a *thought exceeding thought*, a metaphysical desire. At the end of his *Conference on Ethics*, Wittgenstein says something quite similar: «hopeless. Ethics (...) can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.»<sup>184</sup>. But to «respect» something or someone, a friend or a tendency, does not exclude the idea that one should correct that friend or that tendency: «If you discover a flaw in your friend, correct him in secret (...). Corrections, indeed, are good and are more profitable than a blind eye and a mute friendship. If your friend is offended, correct him nonetheless: do not be afraid to insist even if he does not take pleasure in the sour taste of correction. It is written in the *Book of Proverbs* that wounds at the hand of a friend are more bearable than the kisses of

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<sup>182</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 25.

<sup>183</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, p. 41.

<sup>184</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Conférence sur l'Éthique» dans *Lectures et conversations sur l'esthétique, la psychologie et la croyance religieuse* suivie de *Conférence sur l'Éthique*, p. 155.

flatterers»<sup>185</sup>. The philosophical method proposed by Wittgenstein at the end of the *Tractatus* does in fact resemble a certain type of ‘fraternal correction’: «The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—this method would be the only strictly correct one»<sup>186</sup>.

If for Kant pre-critical metaphysics is an attempt made by finite thought to encompass the infinite in the form of (metaphysical) knowledge, if it is an attempt to *bite off more than it could chew*, metaphysics is for Wittgenstein, at the time of the *Tractatus*, an attempt, as much as a temptation, to go, through language, from the world understood as a collection of facts of which we can speak (this is true, that is false...) to Reality understood as a world of facts «collectively organized as a unique whole»<sup>187</sup>; an attempt to *bite off what cannot be chewed*; and what pushes us to try to describe reality as a limited whole is a «feeling» (*TLP*, 6.45) according to which «even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched»<sup>188</sup>. As Wittgenstein says at the end of his *Conference*, the idea is not to condemn such feeling that, «as a ‘way of feeling’, and as an ‘attitude towards life’, seems to contain a certain type of

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<sup>185</sup> St. Ambroise, *De officiis ministrorum* III, 125-135, quoted in «La correction fraternelle», available online at: <http://www.josemariaescriva.info/docs/correction-fraternelle.pdf>.

<sup>186</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (6.53).

<sup>187</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein : la rime et la raison. Science, éthique et esthétique*, p. 43.

<sup>188</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (6.52).

irreplaceable wisdom»<sup>189</sup>, a feeling that *probably* is an essential element of human existence. What is however condemnable is to think that these feelings have a properly cognitive structure, that is to say, that it would be legitimately possible to talk about them in the same way, or in a way similar to the way that I can talk about this cat being on the sofa. If «the limits of my language mean the limits of my world»<sup>190</sup>, it is hence impossible to *get out of the world* to talk about it as if it was just an object amongst others, or as if it was a meta-object. The feeling that pushes us in *that* direction must, according to Wittgenstein, be lived in the silence that is life, silence that is prescribed at the end of the *Tractatus* (*TLP*, 7), and any attempt to *say* this feeling is as futile as the attempt to see the eye with which one sees (*TLP*, 5.633).

Things are *slightly* different in the *Investigations*. Metaphysics is described as an opting out of the ordinary conditions of our language games. It is described as the fact of extirpating or of tearing out a word from its *semantic ecological condition*, as to give to this word what would be an ‘absolute meaning’<sup>191</sup>, that is to say, a *philosophical* meaning, a meaning that is wholly independent of the ordinary ways by which we give meaning to this word. What makes us do such a thing is a feeling similar to what Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus*, a feeling that a complete picture of reality would leave our *Lebensprobleme* untouched (*TLP*, 6.52): «the problem is that feeling or thinking or believing that we know something, or that we can say something, does not guarantee that we do know it or that we

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<sup>189</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La rime et la raison*, p. 35.

<sup>190</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (5.6).

<sup>191</sup> The idea of an ‘absolute meaning’ is a reference to the fact of attributing an absolute value to a fact, which is nonsensical, as compared to the fact of attributing a relative value to a fact; distinction that Wittgenstein speaks of in his *Conference on Ethics*.

can legitimately say it. There seems to be some extra thing that *must* be there to engage with the world»<sup>192</sup>. This metaphysical tendency that I have talked about, this tendency that makes us, in the *Tractatus*, want to *get out* of the world and to take it as an object of which we can speak of, or that makes us, in the *Investigations*, want to tear out a word from its normal context and try to give it a philosophical meaning, this tendency is hence, and I insist, doubled by a feeling of doubt concerning, again, the talents and capacities of our language.

### *B.2 Nuances.*

As I said earlier, these different ‘philosophical hallucinogens’ will play a more or less prominent role for Wittgenstein, whether we are talking of the time of the *Tractatus*, or of the time of the *Investigations*. Indeed, *even though* from the time of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein already believed that the idea of a philosophy guided by a methodology similar or identical to that of the sciences was a mistake that must be avoided – something that Russell and the members of the Vienna Circle did not do –, *even though* he well mentions this metaphysical tendency (*TLP*, 6.52) to say what is inexpressible, a careful reading of the *Tractatus* seems to suggest that, *if one had to* isolate the main and most important source of philosophical confusions, one would have to point fingers at language, or rather, its grammatical appearance, as most of our philosophical illusions are due to the fact that the superficial grammar of our language masks its true logical form: «In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of

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<sup>192</sup> Richard A. Gilmore, *Philosophical Health*, p. 102.

signification—and so belongs to different symbols—or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way. (...) In this way the most fundamental confusions are easily produced (*the whole of philosophy is full of them*)»<sup>193</sup>. The fundamental confusions that Wittgenstein speaks of are here understood to be the effect of two things. Firstly, equivocation, meaning that a word may have multiple meanings, which brings the philosopher to accept a faulty argument. A good example of this would be Russell's account of Hegel: a same word, 'is', is taken to have the same logical function when in fact, this is not the case. Another example, not as brilliantly exposed as Russell's could be the following: the word «just» can as much be understood as meaning «accurate», or «exact», as it can mean «fair» or «in accord with justice». Now one might say that a legal decision that it is just (justice) because it is accurate (it follow the rules of jurisprudence). But one should not conflate those two meanings. Indeed, it would be senseless to speak of an equation is just in the sense that it is in accordance with justice. Secondly, two words that have a different logical role can very well be used in sentences that seem to share a same grammatical structure. The sentences «Somebody cares» and «Patrick cares». Grammatically identical, but one should not those grammatical subject do not have the same logical status: the latter's «truth-conditions depend on the states and doings of some one individual in particular»<sup>194</sup>, of one 'object', while the former's truth-conditions depends on the states and doings of any individual, of any object as long as they can be considered to be a *somebody* (some would say that a cat

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<sup>193</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (3.323, 3.324) (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>194</sup> Arthur Sullivan, «Introduction», p. 53.

is a somebody, others wouldn't for example)<sup>195</sup>. A little further in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tells us that «it is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it (everyday language) what the logic of language is»<sup>196</sup> because «language disguises thought»<sup>70</sup>, which can lead the philosopher to leave the sphere of truth and falsehood, to enter the *zone of the nonsensical*. It is hence possible to say that at the time of the *Tractatus*, philosophy was born from the fact that the philosopher is *misguided* by language, that they are *deceived* by its grammatical apparition, an *apparition* that hides the *real* logical form of the proposition. Wittgenstein will later say that «philosophy is the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language»<sup>197</sup>. Language plays, in a certain way, the role of the seducer to whom the philosopher gives up their linguistic innocence by diving into the waters of philosophical delirium. The philosopher is one who does not understand their own language, one who says «I don't know my way about»<sup>198</sup>, one who finally follows

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<sup>195</sup> Wittgenstein gives very few examples of these 'fundamental confusions', but one could think of Heidegger's meditation in *What is Metaphysics*, as quoted and popularized by Carnap: «What about this Nothing? ... Does the Nothing exist only because the Not, i.e. the Negation, exists? Or is it the other way around? Does Negation and the Not exist only because the Nothing exists? ... We assert: the Nothing is prior to the Not and the Negation.... Where do we seek the Nothing? How do we find the Nothing.... We know the Nothing.... Anxiety reveals the Nothing.... That for which and because of which we were anxious, was 'really'—nothing. Indeed: the Nothing itself—as such—was present.... What about this Nothing?—The Nothing itself nothings.» Not only does Heidegger seem to be taking the word «nothing» as an object about which one could say a number of things, he also takes nothing as being a verb: Nothing nothings». Although Wittgenstein has expressed sympathy with certain existential (Kierkegaardian) elements of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, it is not difficult to image that this kind of passage would be considered to be a great example of philosophical nonsense. Another example: What is existence? It is quite difficult to understand the meaning of this question considering the variety of things that we consider to be existing: love (or not), numbers, chairs, democracy (or not), God (or not), species, the unconscious, light, etc. What would it then mean to give a definition of existence? These two examples are examples of philosophical questions, but it would not be totally false to say that the worse examples of confusions are to be found in the answers that philosophers have given to these answers: «Relation without relation» as a description of the ethical relation for Lévinas, Plato's transcendent Ideas, Descartes' pineal gland as a point of contact between body and soul, Leibniz's thesis that this world is the best possible world...

<sup>196</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.002).

<sup>197</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§109).

<sup>198</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§123).

naively the suggestions of language, which they follow to the point where language ceases to be language, to the point where language becomes nonsense.

If in a certain sense, philosophy is due, in the *Tractatus*, to a type of *pressure* that language exerts on the intelligence of the philosopher, if then, the *source* of philosophy is *exterior* to the philosopher, the description of what Wittgenstein calls, in the *Investigations*, ‘our philosophical illnesses’ seems to suggest that, on the contrary, the true *source* of our philosophical troubles is *interior*: the philosopher is, ultimately, *responsible* and *guilty* of their own confusions, regardless of the fact that language is still and always a continuous source of illusions and confusions, regardless of the fact that language is still able to bewitch and captivate the mind of the philosopher; regardless then of the fact that certain dominant and important images, which imprison philosophical thought, are to be found at the heart of language itself<sup>199</sup>. In a very limited sense, it would not be completely false to say that the philosopher resembles the man *unable to live without the guidance of another* that Kant describes at the beginning of his text, *What is Enlightenment?*: «This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it»<sup>200</sup>. The metaphysical temptation to which the philosopher succumbs, even if it presents itself as a disinterested desire to know the essence of reality, or of a thing in particular (freedom, good, meaning, god...), even if it presents itself as a desire to understand (*PI*, §89), is, in actuality, an urge to misunderstand (*PI*, §109), a will filled with

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<sup>199</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 305. Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§115).

<sup>200</sup> Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’*.

philosophical expectations and prejudices concerning reality and the things that constitutes it: «Philosophy is born in prejudice – prejudice for a certain form of description»<sup>201</sup>.

The lexical field that Wittgenstein unfolds to describe our philosophical problems is absolutely fascinating<sup>202</sup>: illusion (§§96, 97, 110, 308...), superstition (§§49, 110...), seduction (§93), temptation (§§92, 93, 95, 98, 101...), etc. If very early on, Wittgenstein has considered the task of philosophy to have a deeply moral dimension («...After an hour or two of complete silence, I told him, ‘Wittgenstein, are you thinking about logic or your sins? – Both’ he said, after which he fell back into silence»<sup>203</sup>), this is even more so in the *second* part of his thought, considering that the difficulty of our problems, if it stems in part from the difficulty of *understanding* the problem itself, is largely due to our attachment to certain expectations, exigencies, and to certain prejudices, which are quite hard to leave behind. The philosophical effort then, in that sense, is much more an effort of the will, than an effort of the intellect<sup>204</sup>: «What I should like to get at is for you not to agree with me in particular opinions but to investigate the matter in the right way. (...) I don’t try to make you *believe* something you *don’t* believe, but to make you *do* something you won’t do»<sup>205</sup>. And it is for this reason it seems that the philosophical activity is for Wittgenstein an eminently personal *affaire*<sup>206</sup>, which leads him to say that «the philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher»<sup>207</sup>. Indeed, since our philosophical problems are not *objective* problems, meaning that anyone could simply

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<sup>201</sup> Alice Ambrose, quoting Wittgenstein, cited in Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 309.

<sup>202</sup> Richard A. Gilmore, *Philosophical Health*, p. 103.

<sup>203</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La rime et la raison*, p. 21.

<sup>204</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III : Wittgenstein et les sortilèges du langage*, p. 7.

<sup>205</sup> Rush Rhees, *Discussion of Wittgenstein*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>206</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>207</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (§455).

look at the logic of our language and say ‘Yes! There is the problem!’, since then they are born out of certain temptations and tendencies to which the philosopher succumbs, a «community of ideas» cannot be of any help to the philosopher, in the sense that his problem is, precisely, *his* problem; it is *him*, after all, that is lost in the dark streets of his language, streets in which the non-philosophers have no problem finding their way (although the philosopher’s ‘communitarian contacts’ could help him, *accessorily*, a little bit like a believer can better live his faith when he does so in a community of faith. But, ultimately, the faith of the individual is always *his own*, and the work that faith demands is always personal<sup>208</sup>). As says Bouveresse: «Wittgenstein characterizes philosophy as being a work that one must do on oneself, on the way that one sees things and on what one expects of them. It is hence a work that has an inevitable ethical dimension (...). We become, in our philosophical moments, victims to the illusion that reality is being, in some way, unjust towards us because it does not meet the expectations of a prescriptive ideal that we feel entitled to hold against it, and we need to learn with great difficulty that it is in fact us who are being unjust and that it is our own metaphysical exigencies that are illegitimate and that our ideals must be dispossessed of their prestige and of the authority that we think that they must have»<sup>209</sup>.

If then, it is possible to say that, from beginning to end, Wittgenstein defended the idea that philosophy is born out of a form of confusion or a form of *misunderstanding* of

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<sup>208</sup> The limit of this comparison is of course that, unlike the philosopher, the believer and his community share a given set of dogmas. The believer must nonetheless do all the work, and in this very specific and limited sense, one could say that Wittgenstein has a *Protestant* view of the philosopher.

<sup>209</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Santé et maladie dans la philosophie et dans la vie», in *Cités*, 2009/2, No 38, pp. 131-132.

the logic of our language (or of our language games), it is also possible to say that there is a sort of *relocation* concerning the *bearer* of the responsibility of this misunderstanding. While, in the *Tractatus*, it is language, or some of its characteristics, that are, so to say, guilty of the wanderings of the philosopher, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein clearly wags his finger at the philosopher. There is, in a sense, an ‘interiorization’ (*intériorisation*) of the philosophical *ill* (*mal philosophique*), as Wittgenstein no longer only talks of confusions or illusions, but also of *sicknesses*, of *troubles*, of *difficulties*, of *pathologies*, that are ‘interior’ and that inhabit the philosopher’s mind. That being said, even for this *relocation*, his understanding of what a philosophical problem *is* does not fundamentally change. What changes, more than anything, is probably the urgency of the answer that the philosopher must *find* or accept, an urgency that is no longer *merely* philosophical, but also moral, since the ill *inhabits* the philosopher himself, and concerns him *personally*! The philosophical trouble is especially *real* considering that it cuts the philosopher from his reality, that is to say, that it cuts the philosopher away from ordinary life.

*C. The Omega of the philosophical activity: the philosophical ‘solution’.*

*C.1 The depth of our philosophical problems and the importance of their ‘solution’.*

If the Wittgensteinian conception of what a philosophical problem is can be shocking for philosophers, in the sense that it (the conception) classifies what philosophers *say* in the category of non-sense, and in the sense that, according to Wittgenstein, their discourses do not concern themselves, properly speaking, with *things*, but with the *words* we use to talk about them, the idea that philosophy produces absurdity is not so rare in popular, scientific,

and artistic circles. Indeed, it is very (and too) frequent to have to defend the very idea of studying philosophy to uncles and aunts that then drop declarations like «philosophers, they live in the clouds», or «philosophy, what is it good for?»<sup>210</sup>. Things are not essentially different in the scientific community, when we think of the recent disobliging antiphilosophical comments of Stephen Hawking or Neil deGrasse Tyson: «Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly. My concern here is that the philosophers *believe* they are *actually* asking deep questions about nature. (...) Yeah, if you are distracted by your questions so that you can't move forward, you are not being a productive contributor to our understanding of the natural world. And so the scientist knows when the question "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" *is a pointless delay in our progress...*»<sup>211</sup>. The idea then of philosophy as a source of absurdity is not exceptional. However, these 'critiques' of philosophy are *empty*, devoid of any content, in the sense that, contrary to Wittgenstein, they do not try to grasp the source of the philosophical absurdity, the source of the non-sense that traditional philosophy has produced; they are content with the fact of expressing an empty antiphilosophical sentiment.

The emptiness of extra-philosophical critiques of philosophy is not however without exception. A thinker that is particularly close to Wittgenstein in his critique of traditional philosophy, and that adopts an explicitly antiphilosophical position – hence a thinker that

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<sup>210</sup> This second question is, of course, important; and it is not easy to answer it in a satisfying matter.

<sup>211</sup> Quoted in Massimo Pigliucci, «Neil deGrasse Tyson and the Value of Philosophy», posted on 16.5.2014, Available online at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/massimo-pigliucci/neil-degrasse-tyson-and-the-value-of-philosophy\\_b\\_5330216.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/massimo-pigliucci/neil-degrasse-tyson-and-the-value-of-philosophy_b_5330216.html) (the emphasis is mine). Although one should note that these remarks concern specific sectors of philosophy of science, and not necessarily those of political philosophy, of ethics, or of philosophy of religion. On this point, Wittgenstein is way more radical than deGrasse Tyson, in the sense that the former considers that the discursive productions of philosophy are *essentially* non-sense, and that it *cannot* be otherwise; «non-sensical» is a necessary qualification of philosophical discourse.

tries, like Wittgenstein, to give a content to his critique of philosophy – is Paul Valéry. Indeed, according to Valéry, traditional philosophy is born of a lie that it spreads concerning the real nature of its activity, a lie that consists in this: philosophy presents its discourses as being concerned with things, or worst, with their *essence*, when in fact, they are actually concerned with words and meanings. What Valéry says is, on this point, well close to what Wittgenstein says, and one could very well attribute to the latter the authorship of what the former says: «The metaphysical illusion *par excellence* is the one consisting in trying to search for the profound and real meaning of a word or of a proposition»<sup>212</sup>, or again : «philosophy has taken, according to him (Valéry), the disastrous habit to ‘consider words, not as being problems of linguistics, but as being problems of essences and things in themselves’ (...) ‘All metaphysics results from a bad use of words’». Valéry hence has this rather Wittgensteinian idea according to which the discourses of traditional philosophy is the product of a bad use, or of a bad comprehension, of words, a metaphysical use (*PI*, §116), that uproots and that tears out a word from its ‘natural ecology’, that is to say, our use of it in our everyday lives: «he (the philosopher) speculates according to a type of faith in the existence of an absolute and isolable value of the meanings of words. *What is reality?*, the philosopher asks; and *What is freedom?* The philosopher places himself behind a veil of ignorance, closing his eyes on the metaphorical, social, statistical origins of these names; he will then make the meaning of these words slip in indefinable ways, enabling him to produce in his mind the most profound and delicate combinations»<sup>213</sup>.

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<sup>212</sup> Quoted in Jacques Bouveresse, «La philosophie d’un antiphilosophes : Paul Valéry», in *Pourquoi pas des philosophes?*, pp. 254-256.

<sup>213</sup> Paul Valéry, «Léonard et les philosophes», in *Variété. III, IV et V*, pp. 170-171.

Hence, Wittgenstein and Valéry share the following idea: «the historical statements (*énoncés historiques*) of philosophy are not false, refutable, aged and obsolete, this is not the question (...); philosophy, or at least a good part of its propositions and questions, has established its discourse below truth and falseness»<sup>214</sup>, in the sense that philosophy uproots our concepts («freedom», «reality», etc.) from the normal contexts in which they become bearers of meaning, from the contexts that enable us to say truth and falseness.

If there is a certain kinship or ‘family resemblance’ between Wittgenstein and Valéry’s idea of the origin of our philosophical problems and of the answers that philosophers have tried to formulate, Wittgenstein is not at all on the same page as Valéry concerning the attitude that one ought to take when faced with these problems. Indeed, Valéry seems to hold a pretty ‘simplistic’ approach, in the sense that he defends a wholly radical (and probably untenable) form of voluntarism: philosophy being a bad use of words, one must *simply* stop misusing these words; one must cease to uproot these words from their natural ecology, one must hence stop to consider philosophical problems as being serious and important problems, worthy of the attention of the philosophy; one must hence turn away from philosophy and its calls for essence, and ignore it, as one could ignore the whining of a spoiled child.

If Wittgenstein also defends a certain form of voluntarism (as we shall see by the end of this chapter), it is rather what one could call a ‘realist’ or ‘unquiet’ form of voluntarism, in the sense that to *get rid* of a philosophical problem *is not* easy, and that, in fact, the difficulty of the task at hand is not at all accidental, but on the contrary is

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<sup>214</sup> Alain Badiou, «1<sup>er</sup> cours» in *L’antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein (1993-1994)*.

constitutive of what a philosophical problem is. As Wittgenstein says, «The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*»<sup>215</sup>, a depth proportional to the importance of our linguistic practices in our everyday life. The philosophical problem is hence not a mere *faux pas* that one should correct, and the passage from «a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense»<sup>216</sup> can only be a task that is arduous and difficult, the success of which is in no way assured<sup>217</sup>. Indeed, if, as Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus*, the limits of my language are the limits of my world (*TLP*, 5.6), the fact that the philosopher has *lost* their language, or the fact that they are lost *in* their language, implies the loss of a world, a world that needs to be restored, or recovered. This loss cannot hence be taken lightly, as Valéry seems to do, and it actually demands, on the contrary, *all of our attention*, and a considerable amount of philosophical work: «No matter what Russell might have thought, what Wittgenstein has to say about the way that a philosophical problem must be addressed and resolved is not an incitement to (anti-)philosophical laziness, but on the contrary: he articulates a demand for a particularly difficult task, of which the success is in no way guaranteed»<sup>218</sup>. Hence, if Wittgenstein seems to agree with Valéry on the question of the origin of the absurdity of philosophy's discursive productions, the source of its non-sense, he is not however able to agree with the frivolity with which Valéry treats this non-sense: the philosophical gesture is not a *faux-pas*, but a *slip*, in a quasi-Freudian sense, in the sense that it expresses «a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life

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<sup>215</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§111).

<sup>216</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§464).

<sup>217</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. xix.

<sup>218</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, pp. xi-xii.

ridicule it»<sup>219</sup>; a tendency that pushes humanity to attempt to go *beyond* the world, bringing him to run against the boundaries of language<sup>220</sup>, against the boundaries of sense.

### *C.2 What a philosophical 'solution' cannot be.*

Considering the real nature of our philosophical problems, it seems evident that a first step towards their resolution is to recognize that one should not, to a philosophical question, try to answer it, properly speaking. For example, to the question «what is freedom?», the philosopher *must not* answer «freedom is 'this': the fact of knowing no limitations in terms of movement and will» or «freedom is 'that': the fact of the possibility to accomplish certain things in particular». The reason for this is not that both answers are *wrong*, as compared to *another* answer, which would be *the* good one («Ah! Finally, I *know* what freedom is!»): it is rather the very idea of an answer that is *wrong*, or *bad*, and idea that must then be abandoned altogether. «Wittgenstein implicitly agrees with Moore who believes that most of the troubles of philosophy stem from the illusion that certain ambitious and apparently fundamental questions have a precise and immediate sense»<sup>221</sup>. In this sense, the first mistake that we make when philosophizing is to say that we are facing an authentic 'problem'. As Wittgenstein says, «The very word "problem", so to say, is misapplied when used for our philosophical troubles. These difficulties, as long as they are seen as problems, are tantalising, and appear insoluble»<sup>222</sup>. Indeed, the word 'problem' is *conceptually* linked, in our daily linguistic practices, to the word 'solution, whether in an

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<sup>219</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Conférence sur l'éthique» dans *Leçons et conversations*, p. 155

<sup>220</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Conférence sur l'éthique», pp. 154-155

<sup>221</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 13.

<sup>222</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Le cahier bleu et Le cahier brun*, pp. 95-96.

academic context ('Can you solve the mathematical equation?'), in a scientific context ('is X a carcinogen?'), in a common context ('how can I fit all these things in this little car?'), etc. «There can, indeed, only be a problem when we have at our disposal a prior, at least approximate, general concept of what could constitute a solution. And this is not the case in philosophy»<sup>223</sup>, considering the real nature of what constitutes a philosophical 'problem'. The philosophical demand is hence not a demand for solutions, since ultimately, as Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus*, the philosophical problem is not a problem: «And so it is not to be wondered at that the deepest problems are really no problems»<sup>224</sup>.

A first reason that pushes Wittgenstein to reject the idea that one can, properly speaking, give an 'answer' to a philosophical question is that where there is no *real* question, there cannot be an answer – which is the case in philosophy. The question, or the problem, emerges indeed from a form of life, in the midst of institutions, in a world, and it is in this same form of life, in this same world, that one can give an answer. The question and the answer hence has a place. But for Wittgenstein, the place of the philosophical game of question and answer is not of this world (*beyond* the world, Wittgenstein tells us in his *Lecture on Ethics*); the 'philosophical place' is a non-place. Devoid of any topology, the philosophical game is hence *de jure* incapable of being a legitimate 'place of meaning' (*lieu de signification*), a place where one can say something that is meaningful, which pushes Wittgenstein to say: «I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical

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<sup>223</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 10.

<sup>224</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.003).

because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence»<sup>225</sup>.

It is also important to note a second reason that pushes Wittgenstein to reject the idea of an authentic philosophical ‘solution’. As I have said earlier on, «Wittgenstein strongly considered the very idea of a ‘scientific philosophy’ to be a pure (and dangerous) illusion for the philosopher, *and* for philosophy itself», which is why Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus* that «philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word “philosophy” must mean something which stands above or below, but not beside the natural sciences.)»<sup>226</sup> He then says in the following aphorism that «*philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of “philosophical propositions”, but to make propositions clear*»<sup>227</sup>. This qualification of philosophy as being an anti-theoretical activity is primordial here in the sense that it is precisely through this qualification that Wittgenstein is able to radically separate the scientific activity from the philosophical one. Philosophy does not try to explain, or theorize, as the different natural sciences do: «Our sickness is this: wanting to explain»<sup>228</sup>; or again: «This is tied, it seems to me, to the fact that we commit the error of waiting for an explanation; when in fact, a description is the solution to the difficulty (...). The difficulty is there: when to stop»<sup>229</sup>.

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<sup>225</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Conférence sur l'éthique», p. 154.

<sup>226</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.111).

<sup>227</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.112) – l'emphase est mienne.

<sup>228</sup> Rush Rhees, *Discussions of Wittgenstein*, p. 45.

<sup>229</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (§314).

The notion of explanation that Wittgenstein rejects for philosophy is that of the hypothetical-deductive explanation, which is the explanation mode characteristic of natural sciences<sup>230</sup>, an explanation that is based upon a series of hypotheses, confirmable or falsifiable, articulated in a stratified theoretical body. On the other side, philosophy is not stratified, but ‘flat’<sup>231</sup>: contrary to the scientist who works on a theoretical body that relies and is constructed experimentally by the verification of hypotheses, the philosopher, so to say, always *starts from scratch*, in the sense that their *investigations* cannot rely on an already existing knowledge-frame that would make them (the investigations) legitimate. The scientist constantly has a theoretical frame so as to attack the problems that concerns them. They are always, so to say, *situated in* and *guided by* the context of their field of research. The philosopher, on the other hand, being lost in their own language, has no landmark in sight. They are devoid of any context because it is precisely their ordinary conceptual context that is the source of their problem. The philosophical *investigation* stems from, as I have said earlier on, a certain form of scepticism concerning our language, its talents and its capacities. It is hence impossible for the philosopher to found their questions and answers on anything, because it is this «anything» that is put into question. The situation of the philosopher is hence fundamentally different from that of the scientist, who has the luxury of participating in a research tradition that they recognize as their own. The philosopher has no tradition («The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher»<sup>232</sup>). And it is this difference, between

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<sup>230</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 119.

<sup>231</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. xiii.

<sup>232</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (§455).

the situation of the philosopher and that of the scientist that forbids, according to Wittgenstein, any identification, *rapprochement*, or analogy between the two activities. The impossibility to *give* an answer to a philosophical question hence stems from a radical difference existing between the philosophical activity and the scientific activity, but also, from radical difference existing between the situation of the philosopher and that of the scientist<sup>233</sup>.

### *C.3 Draft of what a philosophical 'solution' is.*

What is however significant, is that the «term, 'metaphysics' that he (Wittgenstein) uses, not unlike the logical neo-positivists, to designate something that must be avoided, does not aim to exclude a certain type of problems (those that traditional philosophers have dealt with), but rather to exclude a certain type of solution. Wittgenstein does indeed deal with these problems, and seeks to solve them, although this cannot be done in any case, by metaphysics»<sup>234</sup>. Wittgenstein hence elaborates a «critique of philosophy as theory, a dismantling of its theoretical pretensions, and a sort of preliminary to antiphilosophy»<sup>235</sup>. But as Badiou says, this critique is a sort of preliminary, an initial gesture that opens the way for *another* philosophy, the nature of which is not theoretical; a philosophy that is

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<sup>233</sup> If one must, according to Wittgenstein, resist the temptation to consider philosophy as a legitimate game of questions and answers, if one must resist the temptation to consider philosophy as being another form of life, it is because philosophy *is not* a form of life; it is because philosophy, understood as **metaphysics**, stands and is constituted in its opposition to life and to the forms that it (life) may take, by trying to articulate a lifeless body, a theoretical body, a body *beyond* every forms of life (and that yet, in a certain sense, is concerned with all of them).

<sup>234</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>235</sup> Alain Badiou, «1<sup>er</sup> cours» in *L'antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein (1993-1994)*.

essentially action, a gesture<sup>236</sup> («*philosophy is not a theory but an activity*»<sup>237</sup>); and it is this *other* philosophy, this philosophy-activity (as opposed to philosophy-theory) that I must describe in the next few pages.

### *C.3.i The form of the 'solution': the problem needs to disappear.*

If the traditional philosopher is, in a certain way, imprisoned in an inadequate conception of philosophy (has a legitimate bearer of problems and solutions), and if, in a certain sense, this prison is located inside of the philosopher's skull<sup>238</sup>, the philosophical activity can only aim to work *on* and *in* the philosopher's mind – the philosophical activity is hence essentially of an *ethical* nature. Wittgenstein already does qualify philosophy in this way when he describes the meaning of his *Tractatus* to Ludwig von Ficker in 1919: «The meaning of the book is ethical. (...) it is formed of two parts: the one that is found here, and then, all that I «have not» written. And it is precisely this second part which is the most important». Hence, if the philosophical problem is born in the skull of the philosopher, it is in this same skull that philosophical work is needed, and it is finally also there that the problem can be solved: «Wittgenstein characterized philosophy as being a work of one on oneself, on the way one sees things and what one expects and demands of them»<sup>239</sup>.

The philosopher that is dealing with a philosophical problem is, as I have said, *preoccupied*, and this state of preoccupation is uncomfortable and obsessing: the

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<sup>236</sup> Alain Badiou, «1<sup>er</sup> cours» in *L'antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein (1993-1994)*.

<sup>237</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.112).

<sup>238</sup> In the sense that, as I have said earlier, philosophical problems, contrary to scientific ones, are born in the mind of the philosopher.

<sup>239</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Santé et maladie dans la philosophie et dans la vie», p. 131.

philosopher looks at his reflection in the mirror and sees their face, uptight, and tensed by the burden of their philosophical difficulties. This state is hence not only uncomfortable, but also, and most importantly, pathological, and the aim of the philosophical activity proposed by Wittgenstein is to get out of this state. The aim is a form of ‘healing’, or otherwise said, the vanishing of the symptoms – the vanishing of the problems. Indeed, already in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tries to avoid (although he does not do so systematically) to talk of the ‘solution’ to our problems, preferring to speak of the ‘dissolution’ (*TLP*, 4.466) or of the ‘disappearance’ (*TLP*, 4.1251; 5.441; 5.535; 6.521) of our problems. The ‘solution’ hence takes the form of a ‘return to normality’, or rather, the disappearance of what upsets the ordinary and daily normality of the philosopher’s linguistic life. This return to normality demands however a clarity, a form of transparency concerning their language, a clarity that the philosopher lacks: «The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question»<sup>240</sup>. The ‘solution’, since it essentially aims to make the symptoms of the philosopher disappear, can hence be nothing else than what the philosopher accepts to consider as being the solution to their problems: «The ‘good solution’ is essentially the one that appears to be the good solution. (...) The good solution is mainly what brings us satisfaction and appeasement»<sup>241</sup>. In the same way that the problem is essentially personal, and up to a certain point, subjective, the solution can only be personal and subjective.

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<sup>240</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§133)

<sup>241</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 7.

This is however, so to say, a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one, in the sense that the ‘subjectivity’ of the solution does not imply «that anything is susceptible to satisfy us, that we are ready to accept any kind of solution»<sup>242</sup> - and that, for two reasons: **firstly**, as I have said earlier, quoting Bouveresse, the philosophical activity proposed by Wittgenstein does not aim at disqualifying a certain type of problem, but a certain type of solution (solution offered by traditional metaphysics). The subjective satisfaction that a given ‘solution’ brings is not, in this sense, sufficient in the sense that Wittgenstein excludes the idea of being truly satisfied by a ‘false’ solution – the question evidently still remains: «what does ‘false’ mean, and what is the nature of this ‘truth’ that must replace the false solution?»<sup>243</sup> **Secondly**, whether in the *Tractatus* or in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein’s philosophical activity’s object of study is the «essential structure» of our language, a structure that one could call «objective»: whether we are talking of the logical structure of the propositions that constitute our language in the *Tractatus*<sup>244</sup>, or of the linguistic facts that constitute the grammar of our language game<sup>245</sup>, the philosophical therapy aims to respond to what one might call a lack of objectivity concerning our language<sup>246</sup>, a lack of objectivity that stems from a misunderstanding of the (objective) logic of our language. Whether this misunderstanding is provoked by certain characteristics of language (as is it suggested in the *Tractatus*) or whether it is produced by the philosopher

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<sup>242</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 7.

<sup>243</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Santé et maladie dans la philosophie et dans la vie», p. 135.

<sup>244</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.001).

<sup>245</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §447.

<sup>246</sup> The objectivity of our language, or its public or «civil» character (*PI*, §125) also stems from the fact that there is no such thing as a private language. Language is a profoundly social and intersubjective reality, incarnated through an ensemble of institutions; and it is from this fact, as we shall see, that Wittgenstein will draw the idea that the linguistic facts that he discusses in his investigations cannot be contested, because they are available to anyone who knows the language game that is being investigated.

themselves (as it is suggested in the *Investigations*), the fact remains that the misunderstanding stems from a doubt about our language, and this doubt brings the philosopher to entertain a series of «chimerical hopes and expectations that are condemned by nature to remain unsatisfied»<sup>247</sup>; and it is precisely these hopes and expectations that must be dissolved and abandoned so that one may, once again, feel at home in the midst of their linguistic practices; so that one may be happy<sup>248</sup>. But this abandonment is possible only for somebody that gains access to a certain *point of view* that enables the philosopher to see the world rightly, to see things (of our language) as they are – and this is as much true in the *Tractatus* as it is true in the *Investigations*. If the aim is the same (a certain point of view), what will change however is the nature of what needs to be done so that one may have access to it. In other words, if the aim is *formally* the same in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations*, it is the method that will change and that will give the aim a *content* – it is the method that will give the aim a *face*. And the two different faces of the philosophical method depend largely on the different ontological-linguistic developments that Wittgenstein articulates in the *Tractatus*, and then, in the *Investigations*.

### C.3.ii The *content* of the ‘solution’: methods and linguistic ontologies

*The logical analysis of the Tractatus*. A first thing to say would be the following: although «the truth of the thoughts communicated here (in the *Tractatus*) seems (...) unassailable and definitive»<sup>249</sup>, Wittgenstein did not consider his *Tractatus* as being a *good* example, or

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<sup>247</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Santé et maladie dans la philosophie et dans la vie», p. 132.

<sup>248</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (6.43).

<sup>249</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «preface» in *TLP*.

a *good* model of what the philosopher-analyst must do<sup>250</sup>: «My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly»<sup>251</sup>. The *Tractatus* can hence be understood as a kind of ironic therapy, aiming to turn the reader away from the type of philosophical theory that the *Tractatus* seems to articulate, so that we may see the world correctly. However, the fact of seeing the world correctly is not an invitation to a capricious form of idleness: although Wittgenstein does indeed believe that he has resolved the cardinal problem of philosophy, this resolution in fact opens a programmatic and methodological space, the space of the logical analysis: «I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essential been finally solved. And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that *it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved*»<sup>252</sup>. There is hence a gap between the *de facto* practice of philosophy, and the *de jure* status of philosophy in the *Tractatus*.

As I have mentioned earlier, the main source of philosophical troubles in the *Tractatus* is the fact that the grammatical *appearance* of our language masks and hides its *real* logical form. This duality that Wittgenstein establishes, following Russell<sup>253</sup>, in the

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<sup>250</sup> Although, paradoxically, this *bad* example was necessary (for him) to discredit a certain (metaphysical and, according to him, illegitimate) way of philosophizing.

<sup>251</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (6.54).

<sup>252</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «preface» in *TLP* (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>253</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.0031).

midst of our language makes it so that it is possible to be mistaken concerning the real origin of the meaning of our statements; or rather: considering the grammatical similarity shared by certain sentences (for example, «the cat is in the room», and «God is in the world»), it becomes possible and easy to think that a non-sensical sentence is actually meaningful, that it actually expresses a proposition; and it is this possibility and this risk that the logical analysis seeks to eradicate. Furthermore, considering that the grammatical surface hides a profound logical reality, the logical analysis takes the form of an archaeological movement, since it aims to unearth, so to speak, the origin of the sense of the analyzed sentence, that is to say, its logical form.

The logical analysis however depends upon a certain criterion that enables one to separate the legitimate from the illegitimate uses of language, a criterion that can only stem from a general and typically philosophical interrogation concerning the nature of the proposition and of language<sup>254</sup>. This language is recognizable by its relation with reality<sup>255</sup>. Hence, the logical analysis as a method is rooted in the ground of a particular ontological-linguistic system, in the sense that it emerges from a certain conception of reality, of language, and of the relation that unites them. To be brief, in the *Tractatus*, the ontology is factual<sup>256</sup>, the language is propositional<sup>257</sup>, and the relation that closes this ontological-linguistic system is representational<sup>258</sup>. Language represents reality in the sense that the

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<sup>254</sup> Indeed, if language is but the accumulation of propositions, then to know what a proposition is enables one to know the entirety of what our language is: the ocean is already and always contained in the water drop.

<sup>255</sup> Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, p. ix.

<sup>256</sup> «The world is the totality of facts, not of things» (*TLP*, 1.1).

<sup>257</sup> «The totality of propositions is the language» (*TLP*, 4.001).

<sup>258</sup> «In the proposition a state of affairs is, as it were, put together for the sake of experiment. One can say, instead of, 'this proposition has such and such a sense', 'this proposition represents such and such a state of affairs'» (*TLP*, 4.031).

former is an image (picture) of the latter<sup>259</sup>, or rather: it is the proposition that represents reality in the sense that it (the proposition) is a picture of the fact that it aims to represent.

But what does it mean for a proposition to be the picture of a fact? When one talks of a photograph that would be the *picture* of a person, we recognize that this is so in the sense that the «content»<sup>260</sup> resembles the person. The link uniting the image of something and this something would hence be a link of *resemblance*. Wittgenstein, however, goes further, as it is not just a question of resemblance: «In the picture and the pictured there must be something identical in order that the one can be a picture of the other at all»<sup>261</sup>. What is identical? Wittgenstein tells us that «the form of representation is the possibility that the things are combined with one another as are the elements of the picture»<sup>262</sup>. Hence, when one takes a picture of a crime scene for example, what is identical in the photograph and in the scene itself is the relation between the elements of the scene and the relation between the elements of the photograph: there exists, and we can see that, in both cases, a same disposition of elements, a same layout (*agencement*)<sup>263</sup>.

I here speak of «layout» because the elements that constitute the proposition are not assembled in a chaotic or hazardous way («The proposition is not a mixture of words (just as the musical theme is not a mixture of tones). The proposition is articulate»<sup>264</sup>); they are rather assembled following the lineaments of a structure, of a logic, that is shared with the

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<sup>259</sup> «The proposition is a picture of reality» (*TLP*, 4.01). This is the simplest and most direct expression of the picture theory of language that is proposed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*.

<sup>260</sup> «Content» understood as what is physically visible on the surface of the photographic paper.

<sup>261</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (2.161).

<sup>262</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (2.151).

<sup>263</sup> In a certain sense, one could call this a *geographical* layout of the elements of the proposition (nouns) and of the elements of the fact (objects).

<sup>264</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (3.141).

fact of which the proposition is an image. The possibility for language to be *about* the world hence lies in the fact that the latter is logically structured<sup>265</sup>. The proposition hence has a meaning if the fact is structured in the same as the elements of the proposition<sup>266</sup>. This means that to understand the sense of a proposition is to know, is to *see* the factual conditions for the truth of the proposition<sup>267</sup>. For example, if someone tells me «the cat is in the room», I understand this proposition if and only if I know what has to be the case so that this proposition is true (the fact that the cat is indeed in the room)<sup>268</sup>. The meaning of a proposition could hence be described in the following way: it *emerges* from a given, determinate<sup>269</sup>, and precise<sup>270</sup> syntactical arrangement, an arrangement that ultimately depends upon an arrangement that is identical (not analogical, or similar) to the arrangement of the fact that the proposition seeks to picture; and it is this co-dependence existing between the proposition and the fact, between language and the world, that enables Wittgenstein to propose a philosophical program that revolves around the method of the logical analysis.

The logical analysis indeed aims to *demonstrate* that, although a given sentence («God is in the world») *seems* to have the same logical structure as another sentence-proposition («the cat is in the room»), if the sentence *looks like* a proposition, this is mere appearance in the sense that the theological statement does not give meaning to one of its

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<sup>265</sup> The *Tractatus* hence elaborates what one could call a pure and literal «onto-logy»: the structure of being is logical.

<sup>266</sup> One can hence talk of something like the *organic* nature of meaning and of being in the *Tractatus*.

<sup>267</sup> To understand the sense of a proposition is to be able to see the logical layout that the fact should share with a given proposition.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (4.063).

<sup>269</sup> Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, p. xxvii.

<sup>270</sup> Semantics is hence a mechanical and calculated production of the syntax of our language.

elements («God»), element that does not have any equivalent object in the world. Or again, if a theologian persists in attributing a meaning to this sign, the task of the philosopher-analyst will be to bring to the attention of the theologian one of the symptoms of the non-sensical nature of his words, that is to say, the fact that it is not possible to think their truth conditions. It is of course possible that the theologian will not be satisfied, and that they won't accept the philosopher's analysis: «accepting the solution not only requires adhesion (*adhésion*) of the intellect, but also, a renunciation of the will that is, in many ways the most difficult thing to do. (...) But the fact that the solution is not recognized as such (...) does not mean, of course, that it is not the correct solution»<sup>271</sup>.

The logical analysis proposed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* hence depends upon a precise understanding of the proposition (of language), of its internal duality (grammatical surface and logical depth), of the relation that unites language and world, and of the origin of sense (the logical depth and the representational relation that it entertains with the logical structure of the world); the logical analysis aims to surpass the grammatical superficiality of our propositions to reach and see their profound logical structure.

*The conceptual explorations of the Investigations.* Things are of course different when we turn to the *Investigations*: while *the* philosophical method of the *Tractatus* stemmed from an investigation concerning the *essence* of the proposition, hence from the *essence* of language and its relation with reality, «between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, he [Wittgenstein] has deliberately excluded himself from the paradise of the essential, to enter the purgatory (or hell) of the particular cases»<sup>272</sup>. In the

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<sup>271</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 7.

<sup>272</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 36.

*Investigations*, Wittgenstein mobilizes his philosophical energy to orchestrate an attack against essentialism<sup>273</sup>, in the sense that he refuses to adhere to the philosophical project of reduction to the essential (reduce language to X), aiming for a «clear apprehension of diversity, of the indefinite, and of inexactitude»<sup>274</sup>; he refuses the idea that there is *one* language, defending rather the existence of *multiple* language games where each has its own domain, its own laws or rules, its own objectives, etc. This *bursting* (*éclatement*) of language brings about a bursting of the method: «There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies»<sup>275</sup>. If the language games are the new *places* (*lieux*) of meaning (as opposed to *the* place of meaning of *the* language of the *Tractatus*), and if there is a multiplication and a diversification of the different mechanisms for the production of sense, then the transgression that has traditionally been the philosophical gesture can now take a great number of forms, and this means that the therapeutic road is not necessarily the one traced by the logical analysis of the *Tractatus*.

In fact, the therapeutic road *cannot* be that of the logical analysis, because the latter presupposes that the origin of the sense of our propositions, their logical body, is hidden under their grammatical cloak: the philosopher-analyst hence looks to «to *penetrate* phenomena...»<sup>276</sup>; he «see(s) in the essence...something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look *into* things, and which analysis digs out»<sup>277</sup>. This belief in the hidden aspect of the *real origin* of sense that the *Tractatus*

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<sup>273</sup> George Pitcher, «The Attack on Essentialism» in *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, pp. 215-227.

<sup>274</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 36.

<sup>275</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§133).

<sup>276</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§90).

<sup>277</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§92).

aims to unearth is however rejected explicitly by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* as being the symptom of a philosophical illness: «it is fruitful to view Wittgenstein's later philosophy as an investigation of the conflicting pressures stored up in the conception of a language as a *system of hidden rules*»<sup>278</sup>.

Even if in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein defends the idea that our common language is meaningful (and in order) as it is, the common user, the non-philosopher is always haunted by the idea of the possibility of the non-sense of what he says. We can only be sure and certain of the meaningfulness of our propositions if we do the necessary logical and analytic work. In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein rather defends the idea that «we do not wait upon philosophy to discover whether our ordinary sentences have any meaning»<sup>279</sup>, hence the importance of *not* looking *behind* our linguistic phenomena, and the importance of looking, precisely, where sense manifests itself, that is to say, in the midst of our daily linguistic practices. Making-sense, says Wittgenstein, is not the fruit of the activity of «a will independent of us (...). A word has the meaning that somebody gives it»<sup>280</sup>. If then the making-sense is the fruit of our own daily linguistic activities, the philosophical sceptic doubts concerning this very making-sense can only be addressed, resolved, or appeased by a careful study of these same activities: «The aim is not to build a new building, or a new bridge, but to judge the geography, *as it is now*»<sup>281</sup>.

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<sup>278</sup> G.P. Baker & P.M.S. Hacker, *An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations. Volume 2. Wittgenstein, Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, p. 37.

<sup>279</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>280</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Le cahier bleu et Le cahier brun*, p. 71.

<sup>281</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *La parole malheureuse*, p. 143.

The philosophical method is hence doubly affected: (i) it goes through the same bursting as language, and the method is then not the mere repetition of the same procedure: since the language is not only one thing, then a transgression of language cannot be only one thing neither. The method depends rather on the nature of the problem in question, which itself depends greatly upon the grammar of the language game from which the philosophical problem emerges; the method depends also greatly upon the nature of the philosophical illusion that the philosopher wants to maintain. (ii) Secondly, the healing *place* is no longer *really* the same: while in the *Tractatus*, the *place* that the philosopher is looking for (the logical *place*) is hidden and must be unearthed, in the *Investigations*, everything is on the surface, everything is available, and one must, in a way, *come back* to the surface of our language, one must remember again certain known and easily neglected facts, facts that the philosopher had lost track of. It is this renewed and strengthened trust in the capacity for our ordinary language to make sense that partly shapes the method (or methods) of the *Investigations*; it is this same trust that also explains the importance of the grammatical study of our ordinary linguistic facts in resolving our problems, a descriptive study of the grammar of our linguistic habits that «is supposed to dispel the temptation to seek the kind of systematic account of language and thought offered»<sup>282</sup> by traditional philosophy.

In the *Investigations*, the philosophical problem emerges when the philosopher gets lost in their language, when they lose sight of certain landmarks, certain evidence that, normally, would guide them without any problem; this is what explains the need to turn the

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<sup>282</sup> John Koethe, *The Continuity of Wittgenstein's Thought*, p. 5.

attention of the philosopher towards a series of normal and ordinary facts concerning our linguistic practices, as these facts need to serve as landmarks, guiding the philosopher towards familiarity. However, when I am lost (when I do philosophy), if a speculation concerning the hidden essential structure of the world does not help me in finding my way again in the world, it is no more helpful to simply look around and say, «there, on my left, there is a tower. And on the right, there is a...». As Wittgenstein says, «the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose»<sup>283</sup>, the purpose being to obtain a «synoptic view» of our language game. This synoptic view is not however what one could call a ‘philosophical vision’ of our language game: «there are things, particularly the way our language works, that we do not understand for philosophical reasons, but there is not a philosophical way to understand them»<sup>284</sup>, although there is indeed a necessary philosophical work that must be done to understand them (again).

For example, if one is obsessed with a certain *image* of language (language as a descriptive tool), it *can* be helpful to go to neighbourhoods of our language in which the aim of language *is not* to describe (the neighbourhoods of orders or commandments, those of humour, those of poetry, etc.). Or, if we wonder whether we are free or not, it *can* be helpful to study the different contexts in which we say that we are free or not, so that we can realize that our freedom is something that we talk about in only a limited amount of cases, that it does not make sense to say that we are unilaterally free, and that by ‘free’, we mean a lot of different things. Or finally, if we wonder what it means to count, and that we are convinced of the *truth* of our way of counting, it *can* be helpful to imagine forms of life

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<sup>283</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§128).

<sup>284</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 17.

different from our own in which counting would be made *differently*. These different techniques *can* be helpful in the sense that they try to untie specific knots in our understanding, so that we may see the things of our language as they are: «Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts. (And when you see them there is a good deal that you will not say.)»<sup>285</sup> Indeed, confronted with the fact that language is not only descriptive, but that it may have other functions, one which would be obsessed with the image of the descriptive language will have to either abandon their obsession (that is to say, to heal), or to reject these examples as not being legitimate acts of language (that is to say, to lock themselves up in their obsession); the first option being by far the preferable one. These different techniques then *can* be helpful, but they are not magical, and do not guarantee anything. If they are not helpful, the philosopher must do something else.

The conceptual explorations proposed by Wittgenstein in his *Investigations* hence depend on a certain understanding of language as being a collection of games, as being a multiplicity of ways to make-sense. This multiplication of the ways to make-sense implies a multiplication of the ways in which we can fall into non-sense. The therapy is hence intimately tied to the nature of the transgression, tied also to what pushed the philosopher on this transgressive road. In any case though, the therapy does aim to refresh the philosopher's memory concerning the ordinary conditions of meaning, conditions that the philosopher had forgotten for philosophical reasons. And it is only by having these things in mind that the philosopher can appease their philosophical anxieties. In other words, the

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<sup>285</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§79).

method aims to surpass the superficiality of our philosophical illusions concerning our language and our concepts, so that we may reach and see their actual grammar, their actual logical structure.

*D. A dominating image: 'vision' and logical 'understanding'.*

If in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations*, the therapy is not the same, it seems to me that what is aimed at, health, is the same. I said earlier that the logical analysis aims to *show* to the philosopher-analyst the 'logical point of view', while the philosopher-grammarians seek to obtain a 'synoptic view' of the examined language game, and that it is only *from* this point of view that the philosopher can «see the world rightly»<sup>286</sup>, or «have access to a *vision* of the use of our words (...), the form of account we give, the way we look at things»<sup>287</sup>. But to *see* the world correctly is to see the logic of our language that shows itself in the correct use that we make of it. To see the world correctly is to stop seeing a problem where there is none – after all, logic is the absence of any sickness of the mind<sup>288</sup>; to see the world correctly is finally to accept that «if we do not try to express what is inexpressible, we lose nothing. On the contrary, the inexpressible is – inexpressibly – contained in what is expressed»<sup>289</sup>. But if, for Wittgenstein, «meaning is the *use* we make of the words»<sup>290</sup>, to *understand* or to *see* the meaning of our concepts is maybe nothing

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<sup>286</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (6.54).

<sup>287</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§122).

<sup>288</sup> «Logic must take care of itself», *TLP* (5.473).

<sup>289</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «Lettres à Paul Engelmann, Ludwig von Ficker, Bertrand Russell», *Sud*, numéro hors-série, 1986, p. 209.

<sup>290</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§138).

more than the fact of using them correctly; this means of course that we must accept what Wittgenstein tells us in the famous paragraph 118 of the *Investigations*: «Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand». The ground of language is of course the ground that is our form of life and the different ways by which we give meaning to the words we use. And the silence prescribed at the end of the *Tractatus* is not – and this is what the philosophical therapy aims to make us understand – an amputation of sense, but rather the only way to let sense live and breathe; the only way to give it a voice. In other words, the point of view that is the aim of philosophical therapy is that of the user of language, those who know how to live in language and be happy there; those that are not stunned and overwhelmed by the weight of philosophical difficulties. The silence of the happy man, his peace of mind (*tranquillité d'esprit*) is hence not the death of sense, but rather, its life<sup>291</sup>.

The understanding of the logic of our language, whether it is in the *Tractatus* or in the *Investigations*, is hence intimately tied to the idea of *seeing* the things of language correctly. But this *vision* is not to be understood as a passive and detached form of philosophical contemplation. On the contrary, to see the world *correctly* is to be able to act and to engage oneself in a correct and meaningful way in one's language, that is to say, in a world of institutions, practices, and cultures, and if we must speak of 'detachment', we

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<sup>291</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Santé et maladie dans la philosophie et dans la vie», p. 139.

must not think that the philosopher is detached from the world. We must rather understand that the philosopher detaches themselves from *themselves*, from their own confusions and illusions, and from certain of their desires that they take for realities.

*«I must quickly flee this debilitating field  
to find once again the real figures of the simple life»*

-Gottfried Keller, *Henri le Vert*

### CHAPTER III: Wittgenstein and his relationship to traditional philosophy

The aim of this third chapter will be to trace the traits of a comparison between the traditional and therapeutic conceptions of philosophy as they have been exposed, respectively, in chapters one and two. This comparison will enable me to articulate the beginnings of an answer to the second question that I have raised in the General Introduction: *what enables us to say that, even for the evident discontinuities, the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy is a – legitimate – heir to what philosophy, traditionally understood, has been and has done; what enables us to say that his conception of philosophy is not, like Deleuze thought it was, a violent form of antiphilosophy, or worst, an attempt to «assassinate philosophy»?* This third and final chapter hence articulates the *tension* in the midst of which the Wittgensteinian philosophical activity maintains itself, a tension between continuity and discontinuity; a tension that Wittgenstein himself recognizes: «If, for example, we call our investigations ‘philosophy’, this title, in a certain sense, will seem to be adequate; in another sense though, it will incontestably mislead certain persons. (We could say that the subject which occupies us is one of the heirs of the subject that we have called ‘philosophy’.)»<sup>292</sup>

This tension will be articulated in four moments: **firstly**, the *Alpha* of philosophy, so the nature of the philosophical *demand*; I will touch upon the questions of the object and of the source of this philosophical *demand*, and also the question of its *solitary* character. **Secondly**, the *Omega* of philosophy, so the nature of the philosophical *response*; I will here

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<sup>292</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Le cahier bleu et Le cahier brun*, p. 72.

touch upon the question of the form of this response (the question of its *theoricity* and of its *systematicity*). **Thirdly**, I will rearticulate the thesis' main problem: *what enables us to connect the Wittgensteinian novelty to what the philosophical tradition has been and to what it has done?* This moment will be doubly crucial: it will enable me to articulate the exact nature of the tension in the midst of which the Wittgensteinian philosophical activity maintains itself; crucial also because it will enable me to adjust and specify the parameters of the answer that I will **finally** give to the question that I have just raised.

I must at once warn the reader that the development of this final chapter will be somewhat circular and repetitive, in the sense that I will have to reaffirm certain points that have already been developed in the first two chapters; in the sense also that the articulation of one of the moments might necessitate elements that will themselves be developed in another one. This circularity and repetition will not be, however, an obstacle to the understanding of what I mean to say; they will rather constitute one of the conditions of such an understanding.

#### *A. The philosophical demand.*

##### *A.1 The source of the philosophical demand.*

In the second chapter, I established that there was a difference between the Aristotelian original philosophical experience, so the experience of a certain type of wonder when faced with the «miracle of the existence of the world» (to borrow a Wittgensteinian expression), and the Wittgensteinian original philosophical experience, that is the experience of a preoccupying strangeness, the feeling of a perplexing worry concerning our language, a

worry concerning the *real* capacities and talents of our language. The Vuilleminian original philosophical experience, while Vuillemin has not made it explicit in *What Are Philosophical Systems?*, could well be located somewhere in between the Aristotelian experience (wonder) and the Wittgensteinian experience (worry). The Vuilleminian philosopher, when facing the miracle of the existence of the *world* (Aristotelian element), does not feel any form of wonder, but rather a worry analogous to the Wittgensteinian worry: indeed the philosopher, faced with the localized and spectacular advances of science, feels more than anything the loss of the ‘totality’ that was offered to him by mythology. He feels more than anything the loss of this mythological image of reality understood as a totality; and it is, for Vuillemin and the philosopher, this «virtual totality», to borrow Granger’s expression, that must be reconstituted, a reconstitution that will have, as a guide, the logical voice of Beatrice.

The philosophical question *par excellence* (and in a certain sense, the *only* philosophical question), that of the location of the frontier separating reality from appearance, emerges from a preoccupation and a worry concerning the incapacity of the sciences to recuperate or to reconstitute the lost image of reality, a worry that shows to the philosopher the necessity to do this work of reconstitution by means that are not those of the mythological activity (an eclectic and exploded activity of juxtaposition), but those of philosophy. The philosophical activity hence finds its *source* in the emergence of a worry concerning the incapacity of what *appears* to the eyes to exhaust what *really is*; and on that point, Vuillemin and Wittgenstein seem to agree: the first is dismayed by the contradictory impulses of the different discourses of common sense, and by the incapacity of the different sciences to recuperate these discourses and to unify them under the guise of coherence.

Hence what appears to be evident or even self-evident in the context of everyday life becomes problematic for philosophy because it cannot accept all the contradictory beliefs of common sense in its attempt to articulate a coherent image of reality, or rather, a coherent discourse about that reality. The insufficiency of the apparent to exhaust what really is repeats itself in the work of Wittgenstein. Indeed, the necessity of the logical analysis in the *Tractatus* stems from the recognition that the superficial grammar of propositions actually hides their true logical form, hides what makes these propositions elements of our language. For example, the proposition «God exists», although it appears to be a propositional element of our language, is actually nonsense because there is no object of which «God» is the name. That a name has indeed a meaning is not something that is simply given to the philosopher. In the *Investigations*, the superficial grammar is just that, superficial and it often hides the underlying grammatical workings of our language games. For example, one of the most common philosophical sickness according to Wittgenstein is that of essentialism, to think that, for example, concepts have an essence which exhaust their meaning. There is a strong incentive to believe this because one sign («freedom») is used in many different ways. We are then convinced that because there is only one sign, there must be *something* that unites or justifies the fact that we always use the same sign, hence that there must be something *in common* between the different uses of the same. This, Wittgenstein argues, is a philosophical prejudice and it keeps us from seeing what there is: a diversity of use that don't necessarily have anything substantial (or essential) in common. The philosopher must then see beyond what appears to be a conceptual necessity (a rule concerning the meaning of a concept), a necessity that is in fact the mere expression of a philosophical prejudice. The philosopher must do so as to see what there really is: a variety

of different uses. For both Vuillemin and Wittgenstein then, philosophers find themselves unsatisfied regarding what world has to offer, regarding what the language has to offer.

#### *A.2 The object of the philosophical demand.*

The Vuilleminian worry, although it is analogous to the Wittgensteinian one, can be distinguished from the latter regarding its object, and this difference will have an impact (as we shall see later on) concerning the answer that one must give to this worry. Indeed, the *object* of the philosophical disquietude according to Vuillemin is the world, reality – or rather, the fact that it is not possible, without a certain philosophical treatment, to trace a total, consistent, and coherent image of reality. For Wittgenstein, the source of the worry is language (in the *Tractatus*), or certain regions of language (in the *Investigations*). As it has been mentioned at the beginning of the last chapter, Wittgenstein carries out what one could call a *displacement* of the Vuilleminian philosophical question, a *displacement* of its object (from world to language) that implies a parallel reorientation in terms of the task and obligations of the philosopher, that is to say, a reformulation of the traditional philosophical question: the philosopher is no longer interested in finding the essential structures of reality, since their attention shifts to the essential structures of language. The essential dichotomy of philosophy, the distinction between reality and appearance is hence delocalized from the world, *relocalized* in the midst of language, and reformulated, as the philosopher will now seek to distinguish real language from apparent language. They will seek to trace a frontier enabling the philosopher to put their finger on what makes sense, and to wag their finger at

what is nonsensical<sup>293</sup>. Hence, if Wittgenstein and Vuillemin seem to agree concerning the original philosophical experience – the experience of a certain form of worry or of disquietude – they do not agree however on the source, or the object of this disquietude<sup>294</sup>.

But what does seem to remain, in both cases, is a worry for the *integrity* of this object, whether we're talking about language, or the world (or reality). I mean by this that the Vuilleminian and Wittgensteinian philosophers are both worried about the integrity of reality or of language, about its capacity to fully *be* what it *is*. The evidence of language or of the world is taken to be insufficient, to be fragile, and as demanding a certain kind of *support*, a certain foundation, so that what is entirely capable of standing up on its two feet in everyday life may sit and be rested (*afin d'assoir ce qui, dans la vie de tous les jours, peut très bien se tenir debout*). The Wittgensteinian philosopher, faced with what he – Wittgenstein – will call the 'grammatical surface', will be convinced that *something is missing*, that the *fact* that language signifies and is meaningful cannot solely rest on this grammatical surface (considering the confusions that it can engender: i.e., the curious case of the copula 'is'<sup>295</sup>), and that *behind* that surface, or *under* it, is hidden – no! *MUST* be hidden – a logical reality that can be the only justification of the fact that our language signifies as it does. In a similar way, the Vuilleminian philosopher, even for the theoretical bodies produced by the different sciences, sees these gestures as being insufficient: although the sciences do give us access to certain regions of reality, they are incapable of

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<sup>293</sup> I'm using the word 'nonsensical' in a non-technical sense, and am not referring the particular use that Wittgenstein makes of this word in the *Tractatus*.

<sup>294</sup> Although, one could probably *reduce* this difference to nothingness if we took seriously and literally the Tractarian sentence according to which «the limits of my language mean the limits of my world» (*TLP*, 5.6); the world of language is the language of the world.

<sup>295</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TLP* (3.323).

reassembling these fragments, these manifestations of the multiple, these incarnations of the broken real, so as to offer us an image of reality as a totality. The philosopher, in both cases, is unsatisfied: reality is not real enough, and language is not linguistic enough (*le langage n'est pas assez langagier*). It would hence probably be better not to talk of the philosophical *demand*, but rather, to talk of the demand of the philosopher, a demand that is made to reality or to language.

### *A.3 The solitary character of the philosopher's demand.*

The philosopher's disquietude concerning the world, regarding language, places them in a particularly difficult position, socially speaking, and «what is difficult in the *rappports* of the philosopher with others of life (...) is essential to philosophy»<sup>296</sup>. Essential indeed because philosophy starts off and is fuelled by this doubt about the world and about the language of common sense. But this doubt, this questioning of what is socially and normally taken for granted, is not only a questioning of a given number of beliefs, ideas, theses, etc. What is questioned is also the community of believers, in the most intimate and visceral of its dimensions: indeed, if «to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life»<sup>297</sup>, then to attack these beliefs and these certitudes is also to attack the persons that understand and live according to that given language. These persons, the philosopher «puts them in an awkward state, he inflicts them with the unforgivable offense of making them doubt about themselves»<sup>298</sup>; hence the possible danger of the sole fact of philosophizing:

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<sup>296</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, «Éloge de la philosophie» dans *Éloge de la philosophie et autres essais*, p. 41.

<sup>297</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§19).

<sup>298</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, «Éloge de la philosophie», p. 45.

this offense, unforgivable as it is, can only receive one answer, condemnation and, possibly, death (*cette offense, impardonnable qu'elle est, ne peut que recevoir, pour seule réponse, la condamnation, ou, si la mise en doute est assez radicale, la mort*). The story of Socrates is the proof of that. And a reminder. The position of the philosopher is hence an awkward and difficult one: marginal, and *atopotos*, to borrow Plato's word when he describes Socrates<sup>299</sup>. The *place* of the ordinary world is not sufficient, the *place* that ordinary language describes either, and it is this insufficiency that pushes the philosopher to exile themselves in *another* place, a high-place (*un haut-lieu*), the (non-)place of the philosophical thought.

The general remarks of the preceding paragraph concerning the solitude of the philosopher, concerning the cut separating the philosopher from the rest of the community and concerning the possible radicality of this cut (death), can be applied to both the Vuilleminian and to the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy. Indeed, for Vuillemin, the philosopher is incapable of being satisfied with the discourses of common sense, and with the attempts of the sciences to exceed common sense and to articulate a true, unified and coherent discourse about the world. Hence, faced with the contradictory theses that, in everyday life, intersect without any kind of coherent binding, the philosopher believes that they are invested with the task of *choosing* one of these theses, one of these themes and to elevate it, to ennoble it, to give it a title, that of «fundamental principle of reality». But this properly philosophical gesture brings with it a reorganization of the different elements of common sense, in the sense that to accept this principle (as real) over another implies the

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<sup>299</sup> Platon, *Banquet*, 215a; *Phèdre*, 229-230; *Alcibiade*, 106a.

refusal of all the others (as mere appearances). This choice and the refusals that it implies of course offends common sense in the sense that in the context of ordinary life, both what is chosen and refused by the philosopher is accepted as true by common sense, and placed on the same plane, that of quotidian evidence (*le plan de l'évidence quotidienne*); common sense is ready to accept a thesis and its opposite as being true. But it is that juxtaposition that the philosopher is unable to accept: «For a philosopher like Vuillemin, we could say that the weakness of common sense consists precisely in the fact that it juxtaposes where philosophy proper realizes that it must choose»<sup>300</sup>. The malaise of the philosopher faced with the eclectic practices of common sense, and the choice that the philosopher feels obliged to make are hence two successive gestures by which the philosopher dissociates and marginalizes themselves, by which they exclude themselves from the common space and from the discourse that it carries; an exclusion that, one could say, takes the form of an allergic reaction: the philosopher, allergic to the incoherence of common sense, just as common sense is allergic to the logical exigencies of the philosopher. From the point of view of common sense, the philosophical question already being an insult, or the proof that the philosopher is ridiculous («How could you even put in doubt the fact that the exterior world exists?»), the answer of the philosopher becomes, for the non-philosophical soul, a continuation, or a form of injurious stubbornness, a stubbornness that is doubly injurious, hence doubly condemnable, especially if it is contagious, especially if it corrupts the young.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 4. La philosophie, les sciences et le sens commun» dans *Qu'est-ce qu'un système philosophique?*, p. 7.

<sup>301</sup> Platon, *L'apologie de Socrate*, 24b.

As for the Wittgensteinian philosopher, their solitude, their distancing, their disconnection from the rest of their linguistic community goes without saying: the philosopher is indeed the one who says «I don't know my way about»<sup>302</sup>. The philosophical question, and this is what I tried to articulate in the first half of the second chapter, emerges when the philosopher loses sight of certain essential traits of their language, when they lose sight of certain benchmarks that normally enable them to navigate without any difficulty in the midst of an ensemble of concepts (language game), in the midst of a certain form of life. This questioning, this forgetfulness, this conceptual amnesia of which the philosopher suffers becomes a space, a crevasse separating the philosopher from their language, that cuts them from any reality, and that isolates them from the rest of the community that speaks *that* language and that lives in *that* reality. «The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher.»<sup>303</sup> Indeed, to be a citizen of a certain community of ideas, the philosopher would have to share in common, not necessarily a set of specific ideas, but minimally, a common language, an ensemble of concepts, a certain way of making sense, a certain way of living, etc. But the philosophical amnesia produces a loss of what enables philosophers to identify themselves, to understand, and to live in the midst of this ensemble of concepts, in the midst of a certain way of *making-sense*, of a certain way of living, ensemble and ways that are those of their (now lost) linguistic community. Indeed, in questioning ordinary language's capacity to mean,

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<sup>302</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§123).

<sup>303</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §455.

philosophers exile themselves from their community, and faces the difficulties that are, in a certain way, similar to those that a person faces in a foreign country<sup>304</sup>.

The amnesic character of the philosophical question is not, of course, something obvious for the one that is threaded by a philosophical question; the amnesia is in a certain way the name that the repentant philosopher gives to his former, questioning state, before his healing; similarly to the converted that says that it is only at the moment of their conversion that they *really* started to live and that before this moment, they were not *really* living<sup>305</sup>. But in the context of the philosophical questioning, in the context of what one could call the unfolding of the philosophical experience, this amnesia is taken and understood, as we saw, as being a form of doubt concerning the talents and capacities of the language of ordinary life.

And it is probably this duality, or rather the fact that the philosopher perceives and understands this 'state of mind', first as a form of doubt, and then as a form of amnesia, that will separate the Vuilleminian conception of philosophy from the Wittgensteinian conception. Indeed, the overcoming of this amnesia demands an exploration of what we already know (of or what we already know, not so long ago). Doubt, on the other hand, could as much need to be dissipated by a similar form of exploration of what was once familiar, as it could need an ontological speculation aiming to replace or amend this same familiarity that seems to be, from the philosophical standpoint, inadequate, insufficient, or

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<sup>304</sup> The difference being of course that the philosophical traveller is a stranger in their own country, in their own language, and that there is not, in philosophy, a *lingua franca*, like English, to facilitate the linguistic transactions between the philosopher and the users of ordinary language. There is no *interlinguistic* language. The gap in meaning is radical and total. The philosopher is completely lost. Wittgenstein in this sense, and as it has been said in the second chapter, distances himself on that point from Frege and Russell, who both aimed to articulate the syntax of a language, the language of logic, that would serve as this *lingua franca*.

<sup>305</sup> John 3; 1-21, «Jesus and Nicodemus: Episode of the New Birth».

incomplete. In both cases however, the doubt that inhabits the philosopher puts them apart, marginalizes them, isolates them from the community and traps them in a cage of questions, of interrogations, and of uncertainty.

*B. The philosophical answer.*

*B.1 The form of the philosophical answer.*

In the last pages of the first chapter, I summarized the Vuilleminian conception of philosophy, describing it as being an ontological activity that is essentially of a theoretical and systematic nature. (i) *Ontological*, because it aims to articulate the frontier separating what *is* from what merely appears. (ii) *Theoretical*, because it aims to offer an «image of reality» (aim that philosophy shares with mythology), because it enables the philosopher to *see* reality as it *really is*<sup>306</sup>; *theoretical* also, in the sense that the perspective of the philosopher, that which enables them to see the world correctly, is the perspective of the spectator that is detached from the spectacle that unfolds before their eyes; a spectator that is useless and a stranger to the unfolding of the spectacle and to the logic of that unfolding. Contrary then to the mythological discourse that offered a justification of the practices, of the discourses and institutions of common life, the value of philosophy does not lie in its social utility or in its capacity to reassure the social in its convictions. On the contrary, the philosopher forces common sense to sacrifice one of its convictions (hence a part of itself) on the altar of logic and coherence, hence its polemic and controversial character.

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<sup>306</sup> After all, the philosopher is the one, some say, that sees things as they are.

The space that this controversy opens, however, enables the philosopher, according to Vuillemin, to *free* themselves from what I have called the limits and constraints of the economic structures of daily life, and this space, a *non-place* socially speaking, is hence the expression of a privilege: the privilege of theoretical necessity, incarnated by the philosopher, freed from the contingencies of practice and action. (iii) *Systematic*, because philosophy «is supposed to lead to the construction of an articulated theory, similar to those that have been proposed by philosophers who have constructed big ‘systems’»<sup>307</sup>. *Systematic* also because the accumulation of the philosophical gestures that constitute and trace the traits of a given system are administered by a worry (*souci*) for coherence, and «what measures the coherence of a system and its agreement (*accord*) with the real (..) is a philosophical responsibility»<sup>308</sup> that the philosopher feels concerning the fundamental-ontological thesis on which the whole system rests. In other words, the initial and original thought of the philosopher must resonate and be perceptible in the entirety of the system<sup>309</sup>. *Systematic* finally, because the system seeks, not unlike the myth, to cover with its philosophical coat the entirety of reality: the philosopher’s discourse can hence be understood as an attempt to *say* the world systematically, without exception.

This qualitative triad that Vuillemin unleashes hence traces the traits of a creative activity: the philosopher, through their discourse, *secretes* a world that is the expression of an original intuition regarding the nature of reality and appearance. What comes to mind is

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<sup>307</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 2. La philosophie peut-elle être systématique et doit-elle l’être?» in *Qu’est-ce qu’un système philosophique?*, p. 3.

<sup>308</sup> Gabriella Crocco, «Méthode structurale et systèmes philosophiques» in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, Vol. 1, N. 45, p. 82.

<sup>309</sup> Each gesture of the philosopher must be the expression of a fidelity towards the founding gesture of the system; a gesture that is itself the expression of an original intuition regarding reality and what separates it from mere appearance.

hence the image of an architect that draws the plans for a luxurious, complex and total castle. It is however well known that Wittgenstein's philosophy «destroys everything interesting (...) (which ends up being) nothing but houses of cards»<sup>310</sup>. Opposed to a *productive* philosophy, we then have Wittgenstein's *destructive* philosophy<sup>311</sup>.

As opposed then to the theoretical and verbal philosophy *à la Vuillemin*, philosophy *à la Wittgenstein* presents itself as fundamentally anti-theoretical and silent, «a critique of philosophy as theory, a dismantling of its theoretical pretention, (...) a dismantling or a critique of the category of truth as elaborated and proposed by philosophy»<sup>312</sup>. Hence, faced with the impulsion to articulate a theoretical response to a particular philosophical question, Wittgenstein brings forth the idea according to which the philosophical question is, properly speaking, a hallucination of sense, and if this is true (and accepted), to ask questions about the form of the answer is as absurd as to ask what's the colour of the non-existent elephant. It is not that the qualities (ontological, theoretical, and systematic) are not the right ones, and that there would be another series that would be the right ones; it is rather the fact that there is nothing to qualify. On the other hand, the questions that assail the mind of the philosopher, these hallucinations of sense, are real and the philosopher cannot simply ignore or forget them (*à la Valéry*); or rather, forgetfulness can only be the result of a certain work (*travail*), of a certain therapy. Hence, if the philosophical question does not have an answer, there is however a *way* to address it.

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<sup>310</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§118).

<sup>311</sup> Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Wittgenstein: Why Philosophy is Bound to Err*, p. 43.

<sup>312</sup> Alain Badiou, «1<sup>er</sup> cours» in *L'antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein (1993-1994)*.

## *B.2 The theoricity of the philosophical demarche.*

Hence, a first thing that could be said is that the Wittgensteinian ‘answer’ *is not* theoretical, but that it rather falls in the category of the action, of the gesture, a gesture that philosophers pose *against themselves*; more specifically, against certain tendencies of their own thinking: «Working in philosophy – like work in architecture in many respects – is really more a working on oneself...On one’s way of seeing things (and what one expects of them)»<sup>313</sup>. If Wittgenstein says certain things about language, about the world, or about the relation that unites them, it is foremost because he believes that they are things that one too easily forgets when one begins to philosophize; and he only says them because he believes that they might help to see the world correctly: «The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose»<sup>314</sup>. If what is *said* does not have the desired effect, then the philosopher *must* say something else. Hence the ‘necessity’ of what the philosopher says is not to be found in its truth, or its coherence, but rather in its capacity to affect the philosopher, to upset their (philosophical) way of seeing (and of questioning) things<sup>315</sup>.

The Wittgensteinian ‘answer’ hence differs from the Vuilleminian answer in the sense that what matters, for the former, is not that something should be *said*, but that something should be *done*, and accomplished: the philosophical-therapeutic statement acquires its pertinence not because of what it *is* (or what it presents itself to be), as a

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<sup>313</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarques mêlées*, p. 71.

<sup>314</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§127).

<sup>315</sup> One could say that Wittgenstein has a ‘consequentialist’ conception of the ‘morality’ of a philosophical statement : the ‘morality’ of a statement is to be measured by the therapeutic consequences or effects that it is able to produce in the mind of the one that seeks to be healed from their philosophical worry.

statement; rather, its pertinence stems from its effect on the mind of the philosopher, from the fact that it is efficient *qua* gesture<sup>316</sup>.

Earlier on, I said that the philosophical activity was, for Vuillemin, also theoretical in the sense that it is a process of liberation: the philosopher, situating themselves in a non-place from which they can think reality and free themselves from the structures of daily life and from the contradictions that it imposes on thought *in the name of life*. Philosophy is hence theoretical in the sense that it establishes a distance between the philosopher and the discourse of common sense, liberating the former from the latter. If one cannot describe the Wittgensteinian philosophy as being theoretical – in the sense that it would offer a discursive image of reality –, one could however say that it is theoretical in the sense that it permits a certain analogous form of ‘distanciation’ or detachment from the discourse of philosophy. If traditional philosophy is the promise of a liberation from the errors, the distractions, and contradictions of common sense, the Wittgensteinian philosophy is the opposite of a liberation, because the healed philosopher, the one who ceases to speak metaphysically and starts to talk like everyone else, realizes that the only way to be free is to be-in-the-world, in a world of language, of institutions, of practices, of culture, and that to want to be freed from *that* is as absurd as to believe that we *free* a flower when we rip it from the ground. If Wittgenstein’s philosophy is a form of liberation, it is rather a liberation from oneself, from one’s own illusions, from one’s desires that are taken for realities; a liberation that Wittgenstein sees appropriate to call ‘healing’.

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<sup>316</sup> Although, as Wittgenstein says at paragraph 79 of the *Investigations*, this does not mean that the philosopher may choose to say anything to heal: «Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts. (And when you see them there is a good deal that you will not say.)»

*The personal character of the philosophical demarche.* This theoretical and, one could say, theatrical rapport uniting the philosopher and the spectacle that they seek to contemplate is however rather particular, because the philosopher-spectator – the one that could be defined by the distance that they establish between themselves and the spectacle – is not part of any philosophizing-crowd: the philosophical distance is also that of solitude and asociality; and this is true for both Vuillemin and Wittgenstein. For the former, indeed, the philosopher, *contra* their community, starts to question the different beliefs and theses that circulate (all too) freely (according to the philosopher) in the space of common discourse. They begin to believe that all of these things *cannot* be true all at once, and that the daily evidence is not a sufficient criterion for truth. The philosopher then understands that, from these different beliefs, *they must* choose, and commit themselves to think, that is to say, to articulate honestly what they believe to be the frontier separating reality from appearance. Hence what Wittgenstein says about the philosopher, Vuillemin would probably accept it without difficulty: «The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him a philosopher.»<sup>317</sup> Indeed, for Wittgenstein also, the philosophical question separates the philosopher from the rest of their linguistic community: while their linguistic townsmen are well able to circulate with ease within the semantic obviousness of the concepts of their language, the philosopher can only see a multitude of occasions of sceptical doubts. If all roads lead to Rome, for Wittgenstein, all philosophical questions lead to exile and solitude.

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<sup>317</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (§455).

Furthermore, this exile cannot, for both Vuillemin and Wittgenstein, simply be abolished by the dark powers of the *Negative*, in the sense that the negation of the community that is exile cannot then be itself negated by the gathering of a new philosophical community. The philosophers cannot gather, outside of the ordinary city, in an artificial city, a philosophical city, a similar to the scientific city; and this «is not, as it is often said, a scandal, but rather a fundamental characteristic of the philosophical work, that must be accepted from the start»<sup>318</sup>. Vuilleminian philosophers, if they are united by their respective exile, cannot be then reunited under the colours of a Community of the Answer, because this answer is not the product of a rational choice, but rather stems from a personal and original intuition that must then be articulated systematically. There can hence be no agreement regarding the *real* nature of reality; there can only be different techniques of logical rectification of the philosophical discourse: «These two ideas are contradictory», «What do you mean by that?», «Can you give me an example please?», etc. Hence, for Vuillemin, the philosophical question is a process of ‘desocialization’, the philosophical answer is a process of individuation and personalisation.

For Wittgenstein, the result (the absence of a community of philosophical ideas) is the same, although the reason is different: *even* if all philosophers were to agree on a given ontological-fundamental principle of reality, this achievement would be but an imaginary and imagined achievement in the sense that what has been traditionally understood as a ‘philosophical achievement’ is to be understood, for Wittgenstein, as a form of nonsensical perseverance, a form of perseverance of thought in its magical, mythological and illusory

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<sup>318</sup> Jean-Jacques Rosat, « Les armes de Wittgenstein » in *Agone*, No. 48, 2012, p. 153.

deviations. The only possible community, for Wittgenstein, is the community that our language and our form of life offer to us. Hence, for both Vuillemin and Wittgenstein, philosophy itself is not the promise of a communion to come, on the contrary: the philosopher is alone by definition.

### *B.3 The systematicity of the philosophical demarche.*

Concerning the systematicity of philosophy, although Wittgenstein had a profound respect for (some of) the philosophers of the tradition and for what they have tried to do, it is for him obvious that philosophy can no longer succumb to the temptation of the big systems of traditional metaphysics. The nimbus of philosophy has been lost, Wittgenstein tells us; the image of philosophy as a discovering enterprise has also been lost; and the loss of this image and of this nimbus is not, however, purely negative, as it opens us up on a method: «For we now have a method of doing philosophy, and can speak of *skilful* philosophers. (...) Philosophy is now being reduced to a matter of skill and the philosopher's nimbus is disappearing»<sup>319</sup>. Hence, if Vuillemin, when faced with the two meanings of the word «systematic» that Dummett proposes<sup>320</sup>, chooses the first one<sup>321</sup>, Wittgenstein leans rather on the side of the second one, on the side of a method that must be adopted, and that one must follow scrupulously.

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<sup>319</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932*, p. 22.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Chapter 1.

<sup>321</sup> Reminder: Philosophy is systematic in that it «is supposed to lead to the construction of an articulated theory, similar to those that have been proposed by philosophers who have constructed big 'systems'» (Jacques Bouveresse, «Cours 2», p. 3).

To resist to the temptation of the big system is also a way for Wittgenstein to reject the kinship that Vuillemin sees between philosophy and myth, in their common attempt to produce a total image of reality; in their common attempt to encompass reality and to capture it with the concepts that constitute the system. Wittgenstein, far from aiming to totally capture reality, is quite sceptical when it comes to these kinds of pretention. He is also and mostly suspicious about the kind of intellectual satisfaction that these theoretical articulations give us, and about what pushes us to develop these kinds of theories. Hence, even for the respect that Wittgenstein has for the philosophers of the tradition, philosophy cannot, according to him, allow itself to follow them, because that would imply to entertain a certain illusion that keeps us from seeing things clearly<sup>322</sup>.

The Wittgensteinian rejection of these two forms of systematicity leaves a third form intact. Indeed, Vuillemin supposed a third form of systematicity, described as a kind of resonance, of coherence, or of fidelity of different philosophical gestures towards a fundamental-ontological thesis that is supposed by the system. If Wittgenstein resists the temptation of the big system, and if the form of his writing and his style invites the commentator to interpret Wittgenstein's thought as being antisystematic, one should not forget that the aphoristic ruptures of a philosophical expression can very well, in principle, hide an underground continuity in terms of meaning, of objectives, of orientation, in terms of presuppositions, etc. ; and it is, it seems to me, what one should think of Wittgenstein's method and the gestures that it enables: these gestures are indeed oriented towards a particular purpose, the healing of the philosopher's mind, that is to say, the dissolution of

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<sup>322</sup> Hence for Wittgenstein, an illusion is an illusion, no matter the level of its sophistication.

a philosophical difficulty. These gestures are hence the expression of a common intention – that of healing – and of the acknowledgement of the heaviness and the difficulty of the task at hand. The systematicity of the philosophical activity can hence be understood as being of form of reflexive attention to the coherence of the different gestures, regarding to their continuity, and regarding their common sense of direction.

*C. Reformulation of the thesis' problematic.*

Vuillemin and Wittgenstein hence seem to be more or less on the same page when it comes to the *Alpha* of philosophy, in the sense that both of them think that philosophy emerges as a general interrogation concerning the *emplacement* of the frontier separating reality from appearance<sup>323</sup>. However, when we turn our attention towards what has been called the *Omega* of philosophy, it becomes urgent to wonder whether the difference between the verbal and theoretical answer *à la Vuillemin* and the silent and therapeutic answer *à la Wittgenstein* brings with it a radical modification of the meaning of the question that initiates the philosophical movement, and hence a radical modification of the nature of the activity that stems from it. Maybe this difference is such that it would push us to say, almost as a joke, that if Wittgenstein and Vuillemin are indeed on the same page, they are maybe not necessarily in the same book.

In the general introduction, I put forward the idea according to which one of the elements that could link the Wittgensteinian philosophical activity to what the

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<sup>323</sup> Whether the object of that interrogation is Reality, or Language (or one of its regions); for language, the frontier separates real language from apparent language; sense from non-sense.

philosophical tradition has done would be that Wittgenstein did not try to abolish an ensemble of problems (that of the tradition of philosophy), but that he rather wanted to reject a certain way of answering them (the theoretical way). A question that arises is however the following: *can we legitimately talk of an identity, of a similitude or of a community of questions considering that the answers that we are willing to give differ in radical ways?* If the answer to this question is ‘no’, we must maybe bring ourselves to accept the Deleuzian idea according to which Wittgenstein must not be included in the book of the history of philosophy, unless we present him as being an antiphilosophical logico-terrorist. If on the contrary, the answer to this question is ‘yes’ – which is my own leaning – there is, it seems, two possible lines of answer from which we *can* and *must* choose.

(i) Firstly, there is a Wittgensteinian-inspired line of answer that could be expressed in the following way: there is not something like *philosophy* (*la philosophie*), of which we could give a definition, or a *concept* under which we could gather a whole ensemble of practices told to be ‘philosophical’; a concept which would delimit the territory of philosophy and would enable someone, to preserve the purity of the discipline and of what it does. As Bouveresse says, «the word ‘philosophy’ is not the name of a timeless essence; it rather points to a complex of human activities that are linked to each other only by close or distant family relations and that have evolved historically in meaningful ways, while conserving, nonetheless, a certain community of orientation, but probably not much more than that»<sup>324</sup>. There is nothing more, properly speaking, than philosophical practices that share certain ‘family resemblances’ certain ‘common traits’, certain ‘common places’ (*lieux communs*)

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<sup>324</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, pp. xviii-xix.

or ‘community ties’; for example, an ensemble of questions that more or less go across the history of philosophy: «does the exterior world exist?», «what is the relation uniting body and soul?», «are we free?», etc.

Hence, if really, as Wittgenstein says, «the meaning of a word is its use in language»<sup>325</sup> or, to say it otherwise than with a slogan, if the meaning of the world ‘philosophy’ emerges only through the diversity of its uses in the midst of certain of our forms of life, there is no problem, in principle, in saying that a discipline can, generally speaking, be *unified* by an ensemble of similar questions, even if there is a more or less radical difference in terms of the answers that we are prepared to give to them. It then becomes easy to say what Wittgenstein says about his new method at the beginning of the 1930s: «One might say that the subject we are dealing with is one of the heirs of the subject which used to be called "philosophy"»<sup>326</sup>.

This line of answer has, however, two weaknesses: (a) it does not convince anyone, except maybe «those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it—or similar thoughts»<sup>327</sup>. Indeed, the one who asks to be convinced that the Wittgensteinian therapy is philosophical will most likely be reassured in their unfavourable opinion, in the sense that: (b) if really, meaning is use, and if it is not false to say that «it is the solution that the philosopher accepts as true that illuminates us on the exact nature of his problem»<sup>328</sup>, then maybe we have to admit that even for the grammatical similitude that is shared by the traditional questions of philosophy and the Wittgensteinian questions, the

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<sup>325</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *PI* (§43).

<sup>326</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Le cahier bleu et Le cahier brun*, p. 72.

<sup>327</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, «preface» in *TLP*.

<sup>328</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, *Essais III*, p. 8.

Wittgensteinian philosophical activity is, in fact, totally *other*; and if the activity is not necessarily antiphilosophical, it would not however be inappropriate to tag it as being ‘non-philosophical’.

The difficulty is the following: rejecting the idea of an essence that would exhaust what philosophy *is* and that would delimit what it *can* do, the one who defends this line of answer falls back on a vague (and maybe empty) concept, that of ‘family resemblance’ to bring the Wittgensteinian activity closer to the traditional one. But the vagueness of the concept makes it so that it has no argumentative ‘friction’<sup>329</sup>; the argument has no grip and the interlocutor, the one to be convinced, finds themselves in front of a choice between two forms of ‘propaganda’, in front of two philosophical programs. The Wittgensteinian-inspired argument, although it wants to convince us to do something that we do not want to do, neither convinces us to *do* that thing, nor does it bring us to *want* it, and it leaves us wanting more, faced only with the dense and weighty reality of our philosophical freedom. In other words, the argument does not respect the Nietzschean law of mutual relation: the argument «should be suited to the specific person with whom you wish to communicate».

(ii) Secondly, there is a Vuilleminian-inspired line of answer, which will be mine, that could be summarized in the following way: if, as Wittgenstein says, the first step of philosophy is to entertain a form of distrust regarding the grammar of our expressions, if then the letter can easily hide a spirit that is totally stranger to it<sup>330</sup>, it becomes important and natural to apply this mistrust to what Wittgenstein writes, as it is one thing to take what

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<sup>329</sup> «We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!» (*PI*, 107).

<sup>330</sup> The letter of the philosophical question that seemingly makes sense in fact hides its own non-sense.

someone writes seriously, it is another thing to accept it as true. It seems to me that the fact of taking seriously the metaphilosophical letter of Wittgenstein pushes us to accept as being true the metaphilosophical spirit of Vuillemin: the mere idea of a therapy, and the idea of something like a ‘linguistic health’ that is opposed to one or multiple sickly states «cannot, it seems, only consist of practical directives and be completely devoid of any theoretical or quasi theoretical assertions regarding what things *are* (or *will be* one day) *really*<sup>331</sup>, or at least, a choice regarding what things are. In other words, the mere idea of a therapy implies or hides a certain idea regarding what the body of language *really is*.

It is one thing to suggest an answer, it is another to articulate it. In what follows, I will try to show that the Wittgensteinian metaphilosophy must be understood as stemming from a properly philosophical *choice* (in the sense that Vuillemin gives to that term) concerning the reality of language: it is indeed the fact that Wittgenstein centers his activity around this choice that makes him a worthy heir and member of the philosophical tradition.

#### *D. Philosophy, choice and fidelity*

According to Wittgenstein, philosophy emerges in the mind of the philosopher and takes the form of a sceptical derangement that takes them away from the conceptual certainties of ordinary language. Hence, what is lost is the trust (*confiance*) of the ordinary man, the trust that morphs the common and the quotidian in evidence and normality. This trust gives out under the pressures of scepticism and leaves the spirit of the philosopher in

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<sup>331</sup> Jacques Bouveresse, «Santé et maladie dans la philosophie et dans la vie», p. 141.

the hands of their philosophical uncertainties – between the fingers of the Question. But scepticism is the fact of questioning the idea according to which the obviousness of the appearance that presents itself as true is a sufficient condition for the truth of that appearance. Scepticism is the recognition that, *somewhere*, there is a division, a line, a frontier – in the midst of the field of experience of the philosopher – that separates reality from appearance in the sense that the former cannot simply be identified or reduced to the latter.

The sceptical question is hence the recognition that realism, if it is not obvious<sup>332</sup>, if it is not *ready at hand*, can only be the product of a certain work of thought on itself, a work on what it accepts or can accept as being true. Thought cannot then simply accept itself, take itself for granted in all of its determinations («I think that x», «I think that y», «I think that non-x»...) – which would be to reduce reality to appearance. Thought must, on the contrary, determine itself, choose itself, articulate itself, and work itself, while always keeping in mind the idea of this frontier between reality and appearance; while keeping itself from falling into idle talk that forgets what it is talking about (reality).

«The idea of a phantasm of philosophy, and the idea of a realism in philosophy that can be opposed to it, are essential to my reading of Wittgenstein and to what I believe to be Wittgenstein's main legacy»<sup>333</sup>, Cora Diamond tells us; and it is this worry to think beyond any phantasm, to not mistake our desires for realities, the worry of staying faithful to a certain notion of reality, it is this worry then that illuminates what truly animates

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<sup>332</sup> If appearances are not enough.

<sup>333</sup> Cora Diamond, «Préface à l'édition française» in *L'Esprit réaliste. Wittgenstein, la philosophie et l'esprit*, pp. xi-xii.

philosophy's activity: this desire of reality, and not the reality of our eclectic desires. It is this ascetic worry of the philosophical activity and the fidelity of this asceticism to what *really is*, as compared to what merely appears, that allows us to understand philosophy as being, before anything else, an ontological activity. But for Wittgenstein, as we have seen at the beginning of the second chapter, there is a certain *displacement* of the ontological question: the object of the question is no longer reality, as separated from appearance, but language, its meaningfulness, separated from non-sense (apparent language). What occupies Wittgenstein's mind is the question of the reality of language *qua* language.

This sceptical recognition of a frontier existing between reality and appearance – recognition whose only virtue is to be a sign of the work that thought must do – places the philosopher in an uncomfortable position: their world, the one they know, «shatters on itself and becomes a black hole that swallows what makes sense»<sup>334</sup>, in the sense that this world, as it appears to the philosopher – as appearance – is not enough to secure its own truth and reality. The philosopher then has to affirm reality – because the later cannot do that on itself, or else it would show itself *obviously* and apparently: they must *choose*, and this is what Vuillemin calls a *philosophical choice*.

Wittgenstein does not back away when faced with the necessity of this choice, on the contrary: faced with the question «what is a proposition?» that haunts his notebooks as early as 1914, he chooses what will become one of the main theses of the *Tractatus*, the idea according to which: «the proposition is a picture of reality» (*TLP*, 4.01); that to be an image of reality means to share a same logical structure with the reality in

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<sup>334</sup> Mathieu Charlebois, «Les persécutés de la droite médiatique» in *L'actualité*, 17/02/2015.

question (*TLP*, 4.014); that this logical structure cannot be said, but only shown (and therefore seen), and that it is this logical structure – already seen by the competent user of a given language – that the philosopher-theorist must see so that they can see the world correctly. After a decade of silence, realizing the limits and difficulties of his first choice and of the way he had articulated it, Wittgenstein will make a second choice that is in fact a radicalization of the first one: in the *Investigations*, language shows itself – and is seen – not in the recognition of a hidden logical structure, but in the recognition of the place and role that language plays in our everyday life, that is to say, in the midst of our daily – linguistic or not – practices. Wittgenstein’s philosophical choice hence consists in affirming that the reality of language is something that is shown through its correct use, whether we are thinking of the calculated use of language as described in the *Tractatus*, or of the living and colored uses that are described in the *Investigations*.

But from the moment that Wittgenstein *chooses* to identify the reality of language with its correct or normal use, and from the moment that he chooses to understand this correct use as something that can be shown and not said<sup>335</sup>, it becomes easier to understand why the philosophical question – which is a questioning of this correct use of language – is not according to Wittgenstein to be understood as an occasion to reach a certain point of view, inaccessible to others; quite the contrary, the philosophical question is rather the sign of a loss of vision, the sign of a distracted gaze that does not see what it would normally see. If the reality of language shows itself, to ask the sceptical question of that reality is to confess that *to us*, nothing is shown.

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<sup>335</sup> For indications concerning the Showing/Saying distinction, note 179, pp. 80-81.

This loss of vision, this loss of what gives us access to the world in its most ordinary and intimate determinations, panics the mind of the blind one, and their only desire is to see again. This desire to see, burning as it is, can of course lead us on the torturous roads of error, in the same way that panic, when we are lost, can lead us to run in the wrong direction. That is, according to Wittgenstein what happens to us when we try to *really* give an answer to the questions of philosophy, when we are unable to recognize their nonsensical character. When instead, our philosophical activity is centered on our desire and need to see, when then we address the difficulty at hand calmly and methodically, we considerably augment our chances of seeing again. Wittgenstein's weird descriptions (of the philosophical question as being a sickness of the mind, the method as being a form of therapy, and the philosophical 'answer' as being a form of healing) start to make sense when one recognizes that they are articulated around an original choice concerning the reality of language, understanding this reality as a correct use, accessible to our gaze. Against this reality, there is non-sense, the one we produce; a non-sense that is a form of transgression, more or less voluntary, but a transgression nonetheless for which we are always, in the end, responsible.

A healthy language is hence a language that is used correctly and accepted as such. Knowing this, one can finally understand why Wittgenstein says, at the end of the *Tractatus*, that his book is to be understood as nonsense that one must overcome so that one might see the world correctly. This is not the expression of a stylistic caprice, but rather a direct consequence of the fundamental thesis of the book concerning the distinction between what can be shown and what can be said. The gestures of the *Tractatus* are only useful as long as they help the reader to stop trying to say what can only be shown. Also,

there is hence nothing bizarre about the Wittgensteinian characterization of philosophy as being an act of clarification, rather than an ensemble of doctrines or of philosophical theses. Wittgenstein is in fact completely faithful to the intuition that guides him. In the same way, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein reaffirms this intuition: philosophy and its linguistic manipulations are senseless because they are not rooted in any form of life. Language only has meaning in a life-context, and it is this context that one must find again and see, thus explaining the therapeutic importance of turning our attention towards totally ordinary and trivial linguistic facts about our ways of speaking; because it is this type of things that the philosopher loses sight of when they start to philosophize.

Hence, even for their novelty, even for their antitheoretical character that can very well scandalize many philosophers, it is nonetheless possible to say that the philosophical methods proposed by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* and then in his *Investigations* are of a philosophical nature. If, indeed, the philosophical tradition is a series of attempts to articulate an ensemble of gestures around an original intuition concerning what separates reality from appearance, if then the philosopher is the one who tries to remain faithful to that intuition, who tries to make this intuition echo in the four corners of their discourse, it is not inappropriate to include Wittgenstein in that long list of thinkers: having localized the reality of language in its correct use, and having identified this reality as something that shows itself, the philosophical and discursive developments that Wittgenstein offers us, in their division between question and answer, can only be understood as the expression of dichotomies like sickness and health, illusion and dissipation of that illusion, transgression and correction, etc. And faced with the difference between the developments of the *Tractatus* and that of the *Investigations*, one might choose to believe that far from

abandoning his original intuition, Wittgenstein in fact deepens it; far from abandoning his idea, he reaffirms it radically. What change are the gestures that must flow from that idea. He will come to understand that the *Tractatus*, for all of its good (and therapeutic) intentions, actually paved a way not towards a promised healing, but towards another hell, as it was animated by a fetishization of language as representation that kept him from seeing our language in all of its diversity, in all of its states, in all of its vitality, that is to say, language as we live it and as it makes us live in the context of everyday life. And the emphasis on what is the most familiar to us is not the expression a form of philosophical laziness, it is rather the most difficult thing to do in philosophy: to see what is right under one's nose. Indeed, «the hardest thing of all is to see what is really there»<sup>336</sup>; the hardest thing to understand is that the strangeness that we experience is nothing else than the loss of what is most familiar to us, that is to say our life, and the importance of language.

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<sup>336</sup> J.A. Baker, *The Peregrine*.

## CONCLUSION

Of this thesis, I hope that the reader will have remembered three things.

(i) Developed throughout the first chapter, the idea that philosophy, according to Vuillemin, is an attempt, beyond the mythological effort – that is semantically, semiotically, and methodologically unstable – to trace an image of reality and to articulate the principles of an authentic ontology. This ontological articulation will stem in the ground of an original intuition concerning what separates reality from its appearances and will develop itself systematically from – and around – this intuition. This constitutes the essential of what I have called the *traditional* or *generic* conception of philosophy. (ii) Developed throughout the second chapter, the therapeutic conception of philosophy as defended by Wittgenstein. We should remember that faced with the appearances of language, faced with a ‘false language’ that philosophers of the tradition have developed and develop, Wittgenstein offers a series of therapeutic gestures aiming to straighten out the philosophical mind, and aiming to liberate it from what pushes it to speak a false language – of what pushes it to dive in the dark waters of nonsense. Wittgenstein hence defends the conception of a philosophy that is essentially critical, of a philosophy that destroys everything as if it were houses of cards, a conception then that seems to be totally opposed to that of Vuillemin which seems to have a tendency to construct houses of cards, rather than destroy them.

(iii) Developed throughout the third chapter, the idea that even for the Wittgensteinian rejection of philosophy as a theoretical-systematic construction enterprise, the activity that he has to offer is nonetheless philosophical and does participate in what philosophy has traditionally done. Indeed, his therapeutic gestures are only possible when one accepts that

certain linguistic manifestations are but appearances of language, that they are the fruit of a sick mind that must be healed, that must be *brought back to reason*. Hence, the rejection of theoretical productivity as a legitimate activity of philosophy is itself the product or the consequence of an intuition concerning what distinguishes real language from apparent language. The therapeutic gestures can hence be understood, even for their fragmented, scattered and aphoristic presentation, as a series of gestures that are systematically organized and oriented towards a determinate purpose, the healing of the philosophical mind, that is to say, a mind that is brought to see the reality of language in the appropriate use that we make of it: the Wittgensteinian activity as the systematic and coherent organization of therapeutic gestures understood as a series of steps towards health, reality and life.

A question that the reader might want to ask is the following: is it justified to tie, as I do, the philosophical activity *à la Wittgenstein* to the philosophical activity *à la Vuillemin* through a severe deflation of the notions of ontology, of theoricity and of systematicity? Indeed, this triad (ontology, theory, and systematicity) that is heavy and substantial for Vuillemin, I deflate it into a series of worries (*soucis*) so that it might encompass Wittgenstein's activity: the will to ontology, the will to construct an ontology, is replaced by an ontological worry, a worry to separate reality from appearance, a worry to see things clearly; the will to theory, the will to say reality, to describe it, is replaced by a theoretical worry, a worry to liberate oneself from the pretensions of the Said (*Dire*) to find and see reality as it shows itself; finally, the will to systematicity, the will to construct a descriptive system (will highly attached to the will to theory), is replaced by a worry for systematicity, a worry to articulate the work of thought so that it remains faithful to the intuition from

which it stems. Successive and solidary deflations that become the signs of a philosophical practice that seems to have more in common with ethics than with science. Worries that become the parameters of the work of thought on itself, of what it accepts as being true, and of what it demands and expects from reality.

It could however seem as if these deflations are merely ways to move away from what Vuillemin considers to be essential to philosophy: its oscillation between mythology and science, sharing with the former its ends (to construct an image of reality), and with the latter its means (the tools of the axiomatic method). To «deflate» the Vuilleminian triad would hence be the same as to «denature» it, to «corrupt» it, or to «betray» it.

These deflations are however not to be understood as traitorous gestures, but rather as a way to indicate that Vuillemin's description of the philosophical activity loses sight, maybe, of the intention that gives it birth, that is to say: faced with the shortcomings of the manifest evidence of appearance, thought realizes that it cannot think what it wants, that it cannot accept itself as it is – without examination – since its beliefs are scattered by the different impulses of contradiction. Thought then seeks, behind and beyond these contradictions, what could unite it with itself, hence the necessity for it to think this line of reality, a frontier between reality and appearance. This line is hence the criterion enabling thought to separate what it can think from what it cannot think. This line is then like the compass of thought so that it does not lose its way (*afin qu'elle ne perde pas le nord du réel*). This intention does not seem to necessitate theoretical developments, or the articulation of a 'system' in Vuillemin's sense of the word. What it – the intention – does seem to suggest however, is that the philosophizing thought must be the product of a work, and that this work must bring thought to cease to think certain things *in the name* of a faith

towards a line (of reality) that precedes it<sup>337</sup>. Vuillemin's emphasis on philosophy as discursive secretion hence seems to depend upon a prior decision concerning the nature of reality and the way in which we can have access to it.

The deflations that I propose also enables us – and I finish on this last note – to explain an ensemble of philosophical gestures which are difficult to disqualify: the ironic gesture. Indeed, if philosophy is defined as the work of thought on itself, if then philosophy is closer to ethics than to the sciences, this probably enables us to *not* marginalize these (ironic) gestures that are so important and striking in the history of philosophy: Socratic, Sceptical, Cynical, Kierkegaardian, Nietzschean, Lichtenbergian, Schopenhauerian, and Wittgensteinian gestures. Far from being an ensemble of accessory or passing gestures, it seems that, on the contrary, they are philosophical through and through, and central to philosophy, which seems difficult to accept from a strictly Vuilleminian point of view. If to be faithful to an intention is a serious matter, the gestures of the faithful need not be – an important Wittgensteinian lesson indeed.

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<sup>337</sup> One could poetically say that thought realizes that it needs the music of faith to dance.

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